UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Blogging Music:
Indian Musicians and Online Musical Spaces

By

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Abstract

Music blogging is a new musical practice wherein the bloggers post recordings of their own music on personal weblogs. The members of the Indian music blogging community discussed in this paper have produced four albums of original music entitled BlogSwara and posted them on the Internet for listeners to download and share for free. This paper presents an ethnography of the Indian music blogging community and a critical analysis of the historical and technological foundation for music blogging. The primary focus of this inquiry is to explore the significance of the online musical practices of the Indian music blogging community, both as a virtual phenomenon and as one grounded in embodied experience, while contributing to the development of a global discourse on Internet-based activities through a South Asian-centric viewpoint.

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction: Virtual Music Spaces 1
- Internet Ethnography 4
- Community in Online Spaces 6
- Situating the Internet 12
- The Ethnographic Field 14

II. Background: Shifting Music 17
- Gramophone and Cassette Culture in India 19
- Music Piracy 24
- Internet Music Culture in India 26
- The Recording Culture After Digital Media 30
- Blogging 36
- Creating a Music Blog 40
- Technology and Musical Space 41

III. Ethnography: *United in Music* 42
- Internet Ethnography 42
- Production in Music Blogs 47
- Licensing 50
- Methodology 54
- BlogSwara 57
- The Music Blogging Community 62
- The Songs 66
- Karaoke and Meaning in Music Blogs 73

IV. The Embodied and The Virtual: Closing Thoughts 78
- The Embodied 79
- The Virtual 81
- The Internet and Language 83

References 86

Appendix 1: Screenshots of Music Blogs 91

Appendix 2: Music Blog Statistics 95

Appendix 3: Sample Repertoire List 98

Appendix 4: Interview Excerpts 100

Appendix 5: Survey Questions 105

I. Introduction: Virtual Music Spaces

As an ethnomusicological field, the Internet provides a new and exciting realm of study. This paper introduces an innovative context for musical performance: the music blog. Music blogging (or audioblogging) is a specific musical practice within this field, wherein participants post recordings of themselves performing music onto personal blog websites. Much in the way of traditional ethnomusicological fields, music blogging can potentially go unnoticed by mainstream music performers and audiences; however, for those involved in the "audioblogosphere," music blogging is an important part of their social lives and daily musical experience. The primary focus of this inquiry is to explore the significance of the online musical practices of the Indian music blogging community, both as a virtual phenomenon and as one grounded in embodied experience, while contributing to the development of a global discourse on Internet-based activities through a South Asian-centric viewpoint. The relevance of this research project to current ethnomusicology lies in the fact that people are increasingly turning to the Internet to connect with information, music, and people; there are numerous web sites and online services dedicated to connecting likeminded people from around the world to each other and to the music that they love.

The musical field that this paper will explore is an online community of South Asian people living in India and in the Indian diaspora who share music that they record themselves on a network of blogs. This is a relatively closed community dedicated to the specific practice of Indian, primarily South Indian, music. The members of this music blogging community have produced a collaborative project of original music called

BlogSwara created in an entirely mediated and networked way. They have produced four full-length albums of new music available free for download from their website (www.blogswara.com). The name BlogSwara refers both to the albums and to the group of musicians. The name is a combination of the word "blog," as homage to the music blogging community the contributors belong to, and "swara," the name for musical notes in Carnatic and Hindustani classical music. With the exception of BlogSwara, the majority of the music posted by Indian music bloggers is not original or new, but the global network that has emerged based on the sharing of this music is innovative and powerful as a means of experiencing and living Indian traditions and values.

My first fieldwork project with the Indian diaspora took place in Edmonton, Canada in the summer of 2003 (Keyes, nee Dyck n.d.). I worked with a local group of Indian women, examining how the performance of devotional music in the temple and in their homes enabled them to maintain traditional values and practices while adapting to the diasporic setting. Over four months I attended pujas at two local temples and conducted interviews with members of the community. I took lessons in Hindustani music and learned to sing bhajans. I engaged in participant observation at the temples, actively participating in the musical portions of the gatherings. I also attended several ladies' "sangit" afternoons, which involve several hours of singing followed by an Indian meal. Through all of these activities I allowed myself to be drawn into the culture as much as possible, wearing second-hand Indian clothes given to me by my research consultants and learning as much Hindi as I could. Although I was still an undergraduate student at the time I conducted this fieldwork and it was very preliminary work, it was a

valuable introduction to field methods while offering much insight into devotional music and practices in the Indian diaspora.

I was drawn to studying music on the Internet for a variety of reasons, primarily because I am an active Internet user myself so it is a medium in which I am already very comfortable. As a participant in several online forum communities I have insider knowledge of the conventions common to most online communities, and I am familiar with the process of learning new conventions. I also understand the important role that such online communities can play in the lives of participants, as there have been times in recent years where the majority of my social experiences happened online.

These previous experiences lead me to begin exploring the ways that diasporic musical practices and traditions are iterated on the Internet, to me a logical direction for Indian music to grow in as India has increasingly moved to the global forefront of information technology production. My first tentative steps into the online Indian spaces brought me into a vast body of websites, forums and online services directed at members of the Indian diaspora. As I dug through this seemingly never-ending wealth of information I encountered the music of BlogSwara and immediately recognised it as a unique and exciting endeavor, not only among the Indian presence on the Internet but as part of the broader segment of the Internet involved in online music production. BlogSwara and the music bloggers who contribute to it and support it are an active online community defined in many ways by traditional embodied community boundaries, while at the same time communicating, sharing, and interacting in new mediated ways.

While the body of published academic literature based on Internet ethnographies is not yet large, researchers have been working with the Internet since its inception and there are some substantial works from which I developed my methodology, on which I will go into detail in Chapter Three. The two most influential pieces for me have been Lysloff (2003) and Karlsson (2006). Lysloff's work with the transnational online "mod scene" in the late 1990's and early 2000's is a foundational Internet ethnography in the field of ethnomusicology. His description of his fieldwork methods and comparisons between Internet ethnography and fieldwork in Central Java shaped my approach to my ethnographic research. Also, his theoretical applications to thinking about the meaning of digital communications and online activities served as a useful springboard for my own thoughts on the nature of online community and music publishing. His discussion of the Internet as a "Softcity" resembling a ghost town with artifacts left by people, but no actual people is an apt description of the online world, and

Karlsson's research on an Asian-American web-ring of diary bloggers from a travel theory perspective helped me to frame my thinking of the Indian music blogging community as one grounded in concepts of place and time. Her descriptions of her ethnographic processes also offered an insightful approaches that I applied to my own ethnographic work, particularly on the value of blogging as the focus for a fieldwork project. Her discussion of authenticity in online autobiographical writing is very revealing about the constructed personas of diary bloggers in a medium where many cynical users assume the authors will be lying to the readers.

Several authors have produced interesting work on the nature of online Indian diasporic activities and websites providing services targeting the Indian diaspora. For example, Adams and Ghose (2003) approach the Internet from the perspective of human geography, exploring ways that online space is created as a bridge between India and the diaspora, and Mallapragada (2006) examines advertising on Indian websites and the politics of "home, homeland, and homepage" (207). Whitaker (2004) and Hiller and Franz (2004) both examine the role of online communication in diasporic communications and identity building. Whitaker approaches this topic through a analysis of Tamilnet.com, an independent news agency put together by Sri Lankan Tamils to address and inform the Tamil diaspora and to subvert censored local news agencies. Hiller and Franz explore the use of Internet for migrant workers within Canada: Newfoundlanders who travel to Alberta to work in the oil industry. They describe the stages in the process of migration and the role that the Internet can play during each stage for the migrants and the community they leave behind. Other musical Internet ethnographies include Théberge's (2005) work on online fan clubs and Whelan's (2006) work on amateur musicianship in peer-to-peer networks. Also Pinch (n.d.) has presented several conference papers on his research on the music website ACIDplanet.com. These ethnographies all approach Internet ethnography in slightly different ways, through different levels of participant observation and archival research. They offer insight to alternate methods of research from what I chose, even as many elements are similar, such as the textual, time- and space-shifted nature of much of the communication among members of the online community and between the researcher and consultants.

Lysloff (2003) describes the Internet as "a metaphoric place of infinite space that exists without location or materiality" (24). Information on the Internet is presented in an interface built out of digital code, and every image, sound, and word that is seen on the Internet also exists only in the most abstract sense, as billions of lines of computer code. Internet users rarely see the computer code behind the user interface displayed on their computer monitors, but rather conceive of online space as a vast repository of meaningful sites and pages inhabited by unseen, often anonymous like-minded individuals. This infinite online world exists uniquely for each user, accessed at home or at the office through personal computers, viewed through a small backlit monitor. However, for regular users, the extreme mediated quality of the online world becomes transparent and users begin to feel as though they are experiencing real, direct connections to the other users they interact with. This "culture of simulation" (Turkle 20) demonstrates the comfort that contemporary culture has with accepting mediated interactions in the place of face-to-face interactions, and accepting mediated culture as an authentic expression of the real thing.

In considering the geography of online spaces, Adams and Ghose (2003) have termed the Internet a "bridgespace" (416). The bridgespace is a channel across which human activities are enabled; it is not an actor, but an environment in which human agency can move the flow of cultural information and artifacts across transnational spaces (420). Online bridgespace is characterised by "nodes" through which virtual occupants of the bridgespace enter (421). Music blogging might be seen as one such

entry point to a specific communication channel in the bridgespace that connects all of the Indian nodes worldwide.

The blog has developed into a form well suited to autobiographical writing; entries are often autobiographical in nature whether they tell the story of the author's life or focus on the author's interpretation of other subject matter. In his writing on autobiography, Lejeune (1989) develops the concept of an "autobiographical pact" into which autobiographers enter with their readers. When readers sign onto this pact by reading the autobiography, they expect to be told the truth about someone's life and assume that the subject in the story is real and lives outside of the story, even as the readers understand that they are engaged with media and not life (124-126). In her study on diasporic blogs, Karlsson (2006) observed that most of the time bloggers tend to gravitate to other bloggers with shared experience in order to reaffirm their own identities by entering into the autobiographical pact (205). It is absolutely essential to the autobiographical pact that the author maintains the transparent mask of authenticity because the author's inauthentic representation of him or herself would betray the pact. Moore (2002) demonstrates that audiences ascribe authenticity to music based on the perceived honesty of the cultural expression. When a piece of writing or music in a blog is perceived as an authentic expression of the blogger's true character, the autobiographical pact is reinforced and the reader's assumptions about the writer, and thus themselves, are confirmed.

How does community become manifest in online spaces? The concept of "community" has been theorised across many academic disciplines in an attempt to understand the various natures of community in different contexts and how community

members experience a "sense of community" (McMillan and Chavis in Obst and White 692). The most general definition of community is "a body of individuals" but various more specific definitions are offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "A body of people organised into a political, municipal, or social unity; a body of [people] living in the same locality; a body of persons living together and practising, more or less, community of goods" (www.oed.com, 2nd Edition). A body in the organic sense is a large, functioning organism made up of smaller specialised parts that contribute to the larger function. In using the word "body" to describe the nature of a community, a notion of community as a group of individuals who each contribute what they can to maintain the "body" emerges. In social psychology a "sense of community" is defined by four dimensions: Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs, and Shared Emotional Connection (Obst and White 692). These dimensions of sense of community refer to the way the members feel towards other members, particularly in regards to a feeling of belonging, emotional safety, mutual dependence, and shared values. Obst and White suggest that when these conditions are met, a body of individuals will all have a shared "sense of community," and thus be a community (692). Thinking of a community through the metaphor of a "body" also leads to the conceptualisation of a community as a group of people in close physical proximity to each other—a concept that is not mirrored in reality. Dispersed individuals with shared values and shared interests could be considered a community if they experience all of the dimensions that create a psychological sense of community.

In his comments on the nature of nationalism, Anderson (1991) proposes a model of "imagined communities" to explain how people dispersed across great distances can

still feel a sense of community based on shared values; "it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of the fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Anderson suggests that the origins of national consciousness lie in print culture (37) and he comments on the fact that in a newspaper completely independent, unrelated events are juxtaposed, demonstrating that the linkages between them are an expression of imagined community (33). Lysloff suggests that communities are based on social relationships, and not physical proximity, and thus can function even if the relationships are mediated (28), therefore dispersed communities who invest in and maintain online relationships qualify as actual communities rather than imagined ones. In his study of "mod" culture, an online musical community built around composing and sharing MIDI format music files, he also comments on the textual nature of the interactions in this community. Lysloff's online community is similar to Anderson's imagined community in the textual nature, but the online communities are much more closely related to communities with face-to-face relationships because a great deal more interaction occurs between members. Théberge (2005) argues that the notion of community on the Internet means very little unless it is understood as resulting from a series of consistent, sustained engagements in specific communal practices over time (487).

Théberge's understanding of online community represents a middle ground between Anderson's imagined community based on readers who engage with the same print material across a country and Lysloff's online community where members interact actively with each other in a mediated way. Théberge's definition allows for the notion of imagined community to exist in online spaces where there is also interactive

communal activity. For example, there are regularly active music bloggers and infrequently active music bloggers who all interact with each other as part of the music blogging community, and there are also anonymous listeners who "lurk,"[1] reading and listening to the blogs without contributing. Lurkers can be thought of as members of an international imagined community because it is possible to build a sense of affinity with the authors and contributors in online communities without actually contributing, while the community members who do contribute transform the imagined community among themselves into an actual community through sustained involvement. The lurkers can not be dismissed simply because they do not contribute to the community interactions, but they are incredibly difficult to study because of their lack of involvement. However, every self-professed online community must be investigated on its own terms, regardless of the claims to communal identity proposed by the webmasters or contributors.

As the nature of online communities can be difficult to ascertain, it is important to ask: Do the Indian music bloggers who are a part of this study qualify as a community? Indian music bloggers certainly conceive of themselves as a community. An example of community interaction can be clearly seen in the post of Murali V.'s blog (swara.blogspot.com) on 15 July 2006 where he posted an introduction of two new music bloggers, Sindhuja and Deepika, to the music blogging community, initiating them to the community by posting a song from each. Murali writes,

> I met Sindhuja at *tfmpage* [www.tfmpage.com, a website with forums where users discuss Tamil film music] where there was a section by name "Raga of the song". Along with Sheela (veeNa artist), Ram and Vijay (my fellow composer) we had a

[1] To lurk is read the posts of an online forum or blog community without making oneself known to the community and without contributing to the community. Lurking is viewed in a negative light by online community members.

> superb time discussing ragas of songs, guided mainly by Sheela. All the afore-mentioned have become close friends over the years and have been interacting as if they are a part of my extended family. (swara.blogspot.com, 15 July 2006)

This introduction received 18 welcoming responses from other members of the music blogging community, such as Vidyu's comment "Sindhuja and Deepika! Welcome to the blogging world! It is real good to hear such quality rendition from both of you."

Even though the content of music blogs tends to be light on text, the recordings place the blogger in a vulnerable position, open to criticism and misinterpretation, because sharing recordings of one's voice is more personal than sharing text, which can be carefully edited and revised with little specialised skill. This vulnerability allows the listeners to enter into an autobiographical pact with the blogger based on the perceived authentiqity of the recording as a true representation of the blogger's voice and culture. The music bloggers have shared notions of Indian identity and shared values based on a common national identity as Indian people, even as they are dispersed across India and around the world. The social relationships that have formed among Indian music bloggers are based on a shared love of music and desire to share music with other bloggers, and have been sustained and invested in over a significant time span. Members of the Indian music blogging community have different motivations for their participation and they participate to different degrees in terms of the time they commit to community building and community activities, however when they do participate in the music blogging community they maintain the understanding that their contributions will be heard by people with shared values and a nuanced understanding of the meaning implicit in the Indian songs they perform. Belonging to the community is verified through the

same demonstration of insider knowledge that Hiller and Franz (2004) observed in their study of online communities of migrant workers in Canada (744). This insider knowledge takes the form of references to places, music, and movies in India, as well as the use of Internet jargon and discursive elements, for example, "lol," meaning "laugh out loud" and the ":-)" to indicate that the writer is smiling.

Situating the Internet

From the Gutenberg press to Xerox; from radio to television to film; from the gramophone to cassette to digital MP3; each of these media and their technology has evolved starting from a system of top-down control over production into one that allows for grassroots, democratised production. The Internet in its current form is an amalgamation of all these different media influences. In the early days of computer technology the focus was on computing numerical problems, but since the 1940s computers have been built to execute increasingly complex and varied programs ranging from word processing (following the typewriter) to controlling traffic lights to cellular phones. The Internet was originally conceived of as a system for sharing information across a local network of computers, and like the aforementioned technologies was initially prohibitively expensive and restricted to use by large organisations and the military. It first emerged on the global scene with a public face in the early 1990s, and soon exploded into popularity as personal computers became increasingly affordable and Internet service more widely available through the end of the 20th Century.

The Internet is a complex globalising force, and it is far more than just the dynamic websites in the most common online spaces; the World Wide Web, email and peer-to-peer file sharing networks all use different protocols to move information across the Internet. If we think of the Internet in terms of Appadurai's (1996) "scapes," it may become clear that it blurs the distinctions between the global flows of information, people and capital. In commenting on the disjuncture that he observes in the complexity of global capitalism, Appadurai proposes a "framework for exploring the disjunctures by examining the relationships among fluid dimensions of global cultural flows," envisioned in terms of the physical movement of the people, artifacts and capital across the different flows (33). They are: "ethnoscapes," the movement of people; "technoscapes," the movement of technology; "financescapes," the movement of global capital; "mediascapes," the distribution of images in global media; and "ideoscapes," the ideologies and counter ideologies of power (34-36). The Internet serves as a conduit for the flows across all of these "scapes" as it has allowed for near instant communication worldwide for uses such as booking airline tickets, online banking, shopping, communicating political messages, and moving cultural products such as music, video, and visual art. However, while the convenience of Internet transactions is unprecedented, it is doubtful that they will every obviate the need for real movement and interaction because the greater the level of mediation of a given interaction, the greater the chance for misinterpretation of the interaction by the parties involved.

The Indian music blogging community is a perfect example of the ways in which Appadurai's landscapes intertwine in global flows across the Internet. The community is made up of people physically dispersed across India and around the world, but they use

the Internet to move music, language, money, photographs, and their voices across the "bridgespace" instantly, as though they were next door. These transactions do not necessarily occur independently in the experience of users; they can be performed from one computer terminal, in one Internet browser window, effectively shrinking the distance and disjuncture between flows by eliminating the physicality of the transactions. While the Internet is not without censorship in some parts of the world[2], it has allowed for the democratisation and grass roots production of almost every form of traditional media, including music and sound, print publication, video, and the movement of political ideology and cultural traditions.

The Ethnographic Field

While the Internet presents many new challenges to the online field worker, in many respects I employed the same field methods to my research with the music blogging community as I did with the Indian diasporic community in Edmonton. I have engaged in participant observation (though not to the fullest extent possible because I am not confident enough in my ability to sing Indian music to create my own music blog) and I conducted interviews with members of the community. I sought out the most respected members of the community to use their knowledge as a frame of reference for everything else I learned in my encounters in this online space.

However, there were a number of challenges that I faced in the online fieldwork context that I did not encounter in my local fieldwork. The most difficult challenge was

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[2] For example, China: http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2005hearings/written_testimonies/05_04_14wrts/qiang_xiao_wrts.htm

convincing members of the community to correspond with me. It seems that when there is not the sense of urgency and curiosity created by the physical presence of the researcher, members are much less inclined to agree to requests for interviews, and there is also no opportunity to engage in casual conversation. On the other hand, as most of the primary source material for this study is of a reflexive nature and published entirely online, it is possible to glean a great deal of meaning about the practice of music blogging from what the music bloggers say about it in their blogs. Chronological archives are kept of all the posts made to each blog, accessible from the front page of each blog, allowing readers to reconstruct the history of the blog on its own terms and also in relation to other blogs written during the same time period.

The textual nature of online interactions flattens the social experience of music blogging in many respects, eliminating the influence of body language and reducing the influence of immediate visceral responses to something read or heard since the delay between posts and replies online is generally much longer than what would be experienced in embodied performance or conversation. Not only does this textual nature shape the community to a certain extent, but it also has shaped my interactions with the Indian music blogging community by limiting my perspective of the practice, to what is written of it and what can be written about it. The textual nature of this community also allowed me to access it whenever I chose, any time of the day or night, online or offline if I chose to print or save the pages I visit. The degree of separation caused by this textuality leads me to ask: What does it mean to experience a tradition first hand when it is mediated for all of the participants involved in the practice? I feel that while I am entirely an outsider to this community, my view of the community is the same as that of

every member; an insider perspective is granted, albeit without a nuanced insider understanding of the community, to every visitor in this online space.

The music blogging community that this paper will examine is comprised of 79 active music blogs and the BlogSwara website. I maintained correspondence via email with several of the members, some living in India and some in North America. I performed fieldwork in this community over 7 months in 2007, almost entirely from my home office in Edmonton, Canada. I closely read about one third of the music blogs from members of the community, listened to a large number of the posted songs, and browsed the remaining blogs.

The first section of this paper, "Shifting Music" deals with the technological foundation for music blogging, offering a history of the Indian music industry, an overview of the technology that preceded blogging as well as that which coexists with blogging, and an exploration of how technology has influenced music making in an online context. The second section, "*United in Music*" presents the ethnography and analysis of the music blogging community and their collaborative project, BlogSwara. "The Embodied and The Virtual" explores some general thoughts on the nature of music performance online and how it relates to live performance and embodied experiences of music, while proposing further directions for this research.

II. Background: Shifting Music

Technology is integral not only to the music published in music blogs, but also to the existence of the Indian music blogging community. That this community is tied so closely to the technology through which it is manifested warrants a close look at the technology itself in order to examine how this particular configuration of people, places and music could come to be such an active and meaningful online space. In this chapter I will examine how online musical spaces fit into the wider recording industry and contextualise music blogging in relation to the other musical spaces. I will also examine the specific characteristics of blogging that make it a unique musical space and how this space is created and accessed by music bloggers.

Throughout history, evolving technologies have increased and altered the ways that people engage with music. While the technological impact on music has moved most quickly through the 20th and 21st Centuries, it is a much older phenomenon than that. Early developments in instrument crafting and concert hall design at times radically altered the way music was composed, performed and heard. The introduction of recording technology first enabled a "time shifting" of music, a condition under which audiences could listen to music at a time convenient to them rather than a prescribed broadcast time. Through gramophone recordings those people with the means to purchase the records and players could bring the music to their homes and listen to it at any time on their own. Ever since the expansion of cassette technology and portable music players, listeners can now "space shift" (Trier 410) as well as time shift their music; they can listen to it in any place at any time regardless of the external setting.

With MP3 players that allow for many hours of uninterrupted playtime, listeners can have almost total control over the music that they hear each day, if they choose.

Technology has also enabled the transformation of the intangible experience of hearing live music into a material commodity, an object with a specific exchange value based on the costs of production. Giese (2004) discusses this process in terms of performance and artifacts; he writes, "as sophisticated media technologies evolved through the 20th Century cultural producers, the artists became the raw input material in a complex manufacturing and distribution process that culminated in mass-produced cultural artifacts" (348). With the rise of the Internet however, for many artists these cultural artifacts are now virtual artifacts, digital objects that do not exist outside of cyberspace. This shift from the analogue to the digital is mediated to the extreme—in fact, digital music does not even necessitate that musicians ever be involved in the creation of the music, it can all be done by an unsupervised computer program. While this musicianless music has commercial and artistic potential, it is still very rare to find music on the Internet that was not created by embodied musicians using acoustic or electronic instruments or sampling and remixing previously recorded music, even if the musicians are distributed around the world, as is the case of the Indian music blogging community. Not only is the listening experience time shifted and space shifted, but the creation of music online is also shifted as collaborations between dispersed musicians occur as digital files are shared and expanded.

With recording technology there has been change in mode of production from a style of musical performance where musicians were paid directly for each performance and had significant power over the means of production to an assembly line mode of

production where the musicians are "merely the first link in a modern manufacturing chain, ceding much of their productions' value to the industrialists who [have] the capital necessary to reproduce and distribute [the recordings] to a wide audience" (Giese 354). The powerful record labels in the recording industry continue to manage as many aspects of commercial music making, recording and distribution as they can, maintaining hegemonic control over the musicians, sound engineers, and engineers who make recordings possible. However, with the increasing availability of personal recording devices such as cassette, minidisk and DAT, and MP3 recorders, as well as affordable home studios and the Internet, this top-down system has been turned upside down, and musicians can now have primary control over their musical products more easily than ever. The main disadvantage of self-production is that while the musical products created by independent musicians may have more creative potential than those produced under a record label, they do not carry the same cultural capital and marketability as music produced under big-name record labels, and thus have smaller commercial potential (Ryan and Hughes 246).

Gramophone and Cassette Culture in India

Recording culture in India has undergone many transformations since the first recording technology was introduced there by the English colonialists more than a century ago. Early gramophone recordings established Indian music as highly commodifiable and saleable, dominated by recordings of star performers (Marcus 173, Farrell 36), but in a medium not easily accessible to the majority of potential listeners.

From the early twentieth century up to the 1980s the Indian recording industry was divided into two methods of distribution: gramophone and radio. With the introduction of cassette technology in the 1980s, a cassette culture characterised by three processes of production emerged in India: First, mass production of recordings by major label companies; second, regional recording and distribution of local music by small companies; and third, copy and distribution of pirated copies of major label recordings by small businesses (Manuel 1993). The decentralisation of the production of cassette technology made manufacturing the cassettes very cost effective because the manufacturers could source parts from a variety of suppliers from India and other parts of Asia, especially Japan. The affordable production costs allowed individuals from all economic spheres to acquire cassettes and cassette players, opening the door for a grassroots movement of widespread recording and distribution among regional groups. Today, in contemporary global culture, musicians and audiences are equipped with a variety of affordable digital personal devices that allow them to make video and audio recordings and post them on the Internet, where they can instantly be distributed globally in a variety of ways. For a musical culture that has long been media-oriented in many respects, the Internet opens up countless opportunities for Indian people in India and abroad to share and find music of any type and connect with other people who appreciate the same music.

In his study of the early recording industry in India, Farrell (1993) writes that the first commercial recordings of Indian music were made in 1902 by Fred Gaisberg, a representative of the English company Gramophone and Typewriter Limited (later EMI). GTL initially sent Gaisberg on a "recording expedition" to India to meet the demand of

the English market for rare and exotic music. The first recordings represented a spectrum of samples from the music that was available among local performers in Calcutta, where GTL's Indian office was located. Initially the records were sent back to England for manufacture and sale, but by late 1903 GTL was beginning to sell gramophones to the Indian middle and upper classes, and Indian consumers made up the bulk of the market. Within five years, GTL had produced an extensive catalogue featuring recordings in a variety of Indian dialects, a large percentage of which were performed by star singers who could sing in several languages. However, they did not establish the first Indian pressing plant until around 1910, and the early demand in India was often much greater than the supply (Farrell 32-41). By the 1930s gramophones were standard fixtures in upper class Indian homes (Qureshi 69), and Farrell (1993) suggests that during that time the gramophone itself was more of a status symbol than the music that was being played on it (40).

At the same time in India, national radio broadcast was being introduced across India with All-India Radio. The recording industry acted as a sort of counter culture for musicians and listeners to the top-down government control of broadcast music. Gramophone manufacturers produced recordings that they felt would be popular and turn a profit, while All-India Radio was concerned primarily with conveying specific political messages (Lelyveld 114). Prior to 1952 all broadcasts were live performances by musicians in the studio and were not recorded, and both the recording industry and radio introduced significant changes to musical form based on the time restrictions imposed by the media (Lelyveld 115). While the radio and recording industries were separate in

terms of their aims and goals, they were both parts of a vibrant musical culture and were no doubt mutually influential.

From the 1930s through to the 1980s records were the primary medium for recorded music in India, with a wide variety of genres available to the consumer. The gramophone recording industry was monopolised by a select few English recording companies whose executives maintained centralised control over the production and distribution of recordings. GTL became Electric and Music Industries (later changing its name to EMI Ltd.0) in 1931 through a merger between Gramophone and Typewriter Limited and the UK Columbia Gramophone Company, and remained, with its subsidiaries, the dominant record company in the Indian market through this period (Manuel 37). Gramophone recordings had a very significant impact on musical form, as the typically lengthy and intricate classical compositions had to be shortened to fit onto a three-minute side. This necessity of the medium pulled the focus away from virtuosic vocal performances and improvisation that had been priorities in live performance of Indian classical music (Qureshi 68). By the 1930s lyric-centered film songs short enough to fit comfortably onto records came to dominate the gramophone market in a massive way—for roughly 40 years, until the advent of cassette technology, "commercial popular music was virtually synonymous with film music... marginalising all other forms of mass-mediated music in the process" (Manuel 41). Even today, no other music genre has come close to rivaling the market share of film music.

The gramophone era of the music industry in India established a strong precedent for recorded music, and the disposable income and leisure time associated with acquiring and listening to it was an indicator of class. However, the cassette era created a

widespread, virtually classless culture of entitlement to recorded music and embedded the acceptability of sharing recorded music through copying. The cassette boom began in the 1980s for India, ushering in a quick and steady growth in luxury consumer electronics among the large and growing middle class (Manuel 62). Cassettes caught on quickly among consumers because the two-in-one player-recorders were cheap and very portable with simple energy requirements, and the cassette format caught on quickly with the industry because cassettes were much cheaper to manufacture, reproduce, and distribute than vinyl records. The ease of production with cassette technology enabled a significant grassroots level of recording and distribution, decentralising and diversifying the music industry. While small studios released recordings of regional music, the large studios that had previously monopolised the music industry during the gramophone era continued to release recordings of Hindi film music and superstar artists with pan-regional appeal (Manuel 157). Small-name artists recording regional styles of music could easily find studios to record them at a relatively low cost, and sales of just 100 cassettes could be enough for the studios to turn a profit (Manuel 73). In this way, relatively unknown professional and amateur musicians could easily reach out to much larger, pan-regional audiences who would previously not have heard of them outside of local live performances. Manuel estimates that in 1991 recordings of regional music genres produced by cottage industry studios constituted 40 to 60 percent of the entire recording market in India (156). Thus the cassette boom in India created a musical culture in which it was possible and desirable for small local performers to record their music and share it with as wide an audience as possible—a process we see mirrored in music blogging.

Music Piracy

Hand in hand with the legitimate music industry grew the other face of music sharing: piracy, the unauthorised duplication and distribution of copyrighted recordings, fueled initially by the same factors of low cost and ease of production that made cassette technology so popular in the first place. Music piracy in India has three forms: bootleg recordings of live performances, "mix tapes" made by dubbing select songs for individual customers, and the largest form, mass duplication and sale of copies of commercial recordings (Manuel 78-80). Although piracy in India is rampant, India is rarely mentioned in the "Enforcement Bulletin" on anti-piracy actions published by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) (only twice since 2003), which publishes comprehensive updates on all the actions take by authorities against pirate music producers in member countries. Both mentions were of operations to shut down plants producing pirated CDs and VCDs (Betsy 2003, Hegger 2006).

With the advent of compact disc technology the possibilities for piracy has grown exponentially as CD media are even cheaper than cassettes and lossless copies can be made at up to eight times or more the real time speed of the original copy, and in massive quantities with the right equipment. The Internet goes even one step further, allowing songs to be downloaded and copied an infinite number of times with no media cost by anyone with the means to own or access a personal computer. However, due to the restrictive cost of owning a personal computer, CD piracy is largely limited to those with the means to operate substantial operations with valuable equipment and Internet piracy is limited to those who also have access to broadband Internet connections.

Piracy in India is so pervasive largely due to the fact that prior to the 1984 amendment to the Indian Copyright Act of 1957, there were no legal sanctions for copying sound recordings because, as in other parts of Asia, their copyright law was a remnant of the colonial era when piracy was virtually nonexistent (Manuel 83). After the 1984 amendment legal enforcement of copyright infringement took a long time to begin to be established, and even today enforcement is much weaker than in the Western countries that are pushing the hardest for sanctions against infringers.

Piracy has had such a profound impact on the music industry that today the public relations of all the major music industry associations have anti-piracy news headlines, FAQs and information taking up the largest portions of the homepage on their websites. The Indian Music Industry (IMI) is a member of the IFPI. According to their website (www.indianmi.org) they are committed to prosecuting companies that produce pirated recordings, and on their front page they list recent raids seizing media and recording equipment from piracy operations. Both organisations list information about copyright law and piracy statistics on their websites (www.indianmi.org, www.ifpi.org), as well as numerous anti-piracy advertisements and warnings. The music industries in North America and India, as well as internationally, have become so concerned with issues of piracy that from their websites it is difficult to determine what they do besides attempting to combat piracy, specifically by targeting the producers of pirated media and the consumers of music downloaded illegally from the Internet. I believe that this sense of entitlement to music recordings that seems to be reflected in the pervasiveness of music piracy in India represents part of the driving force behind the music blogging community because they freely record covers of copyrighted material without questioning the legal

implications of their actions, as part of a larger music culture accustomed to sharing music widely in the easiest way possible.

Internet Music Culture in India

Internet music culture in India is tied closely to the information technology (IT) boom that has taken place in the urban centers, particularly in southern India. Cities such as Bangalore, Chennai, and Trivandrum have become major urban areas filled with young, educated IT workers who have the disposable income to acquire personal computers, and who know how to use them; "the high skill level and professional aspirations of [Indian people in India and in the diaspora] helps explain its high receptivity to the adoption of computer technologies not just at work but also for personal and community use" (Adams and Ghose 421). The Indian musical presence on the Internet is split into two fairly distinct motivations, the first is accessing and discussing professional recordings, particularly from film music; the second is a creative music scene where amateur and semi-professional musicians post their own recordings to share and discuss with other musicians and with fans. These two online worlds overlap in terms of user base, however they largely exist in separate online spaces.

The first space is where fans visit to talk about the artists and music that they love. Previously this primarily took the form of newsgroups, but as Usenet[3] fades into obsoletion forums and fan sites have taken its place, for example the BollywoodMusic.com forums (www.globalindia.com/bwforums). In forums like these

[3] Usenet (a contraction of *user network*) is a precursor to the web forums popular today. Conceived in 1979, it is one of the oldest online network systems still in use, though declining in popularity. It is a global, decentralised, distributed, Internet discussion system that works off of a similar protocol to email.

various discussion categories are laid out by the forum moderators, in this case some are "Movies and TV," "Music," and "Relationships and Advice." Within each category users can post threads or reply to other people's posts. Forums of this type are usually closely moderated by the site owners to ensure that the discussion topics are relevant to their categories and appropriate for viewing by the target audience based on the topical focus of the forum[4]. There are also a variety of forums on the Internet dedicated to specific singers, actors or movies, where fans will post to discuss, praise or criticise details of the subject and gossip about it. Forums dedicated to supporting fan culture and unofficial fan sites are generally not-for-profit sites that are supported by advertising revenue on the site, whereas official fan club websites are generally supported by the record label and often for-profit, earning revenue from subscription fees and merchandise sales.

Théberge (2005) presents an interesting study of fan sites on the Internet, exploring ways in which online fan clubs are becoming increasingly influential in the decision making processes of artists and record companies. He suggests that "organised fandom" began with offline fan clubs organised for the promotion of rising stars in music and film, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, through the sale of merchandise and targeted advertising campaigns that were designed to prolong the experience (and hence the public anticipation) of seeing the performer (488). Online fan sites and artist blogs serve as arenas in which fans interact daily, often with the artists "themselves"—while it is probably not uncommon for many artists to contribute personally to these discussions, it is probably more common that in the case of big-name artists most of the contributions

[4] Most forums are topical in nature, and the forum owners determine the topic. The target audience for a forum is generally people who are interested in engaging in discussion on the topic covered by the forums.

are made by label representatives in the artists' names. Additionally, online fan sites often offer promotional deals for members on concert tickets and merchandise, reserving preferential seating and signed items for fans. The recording industry has found a new and very profitable source of revenue in fan clubs, charging small subscription fees for membership in official fan clubs. The "poster child" of the online club phenomenon, Dave Matthews Band, grossed over $2 million in subscription fees alone in 2005 (Théberge 494).

The second online space for music sharing is also found in dedicated forums, but generally as part of a larger online service that offers storage space, information on recording equipment and technique, and social networking tools to registered users. One popular website is Soundclick.com (www.soundclick.com) with over three million registered users, where artists and bands create profiles and can link to other artists and bands, and where they can post their music for download and feedback, where they can discuss a variety of topics related to recording, producing, and marketing their music. Soundclick has different tiers of membership with different services available for variable subscriber rates. The Soundclick owners are very proactive in enforcing copyright laws and punish infringers by banning them from the site. In addition to hosting members' sound files, they offer a service that manages licenses for the music through a pay-per-download system. Web services like Soundclick act as a meeting ground for creative people to share their own music and get feedback in a relatively safe environment.

Another site similar to Soundclick in some respects but focused on Hindi karaoke is Taranaa Tarang (www.taranaa.com). Taranaa is considerably smaller and less professional than Soundclick with only 188 registered users on their forums, but provides

several of the same services in a more specialised way. Registered users pay a subscription fee that gives them access to karaoke tracks for download. The quality of the tracks available from Taranaa varies greatly, but many of them are very poor quality MIDI files. Taranaa operates forums where users can discuss technical aspects of recording, as well as post links to their songs for feedback. Additionally, they host contests and name stars of the month, titles which confer a great deal of prestige among forum community members. Again, these forums are heavily moderated to keep discussions on topic, and users are expected to explore and "lurk" in the forums to become accustomed to the posting conventions. Soundclick and Taranaa both provide wiki-style blogs for registered users where they can post their recordings. For many of my research consultants in the music blog community, Soundclick and Taranaa were their first introduction to sharing their own music online, and claimed that building an independent, personal music blog was a natural next step for any dedicated member of these forum communities. Both of these websites are for-profit and run by companies who operate the administrative duties of maintaining the sites and work to build and strengthen the communities through the forums and networking activities.

A third site that is immensely popular is MySpace, a social networking service that features everything from fan pages dedicated to artists, to marketing pages for independent artists, to online dating profiles. Compared to forums and blogging, MySpace is wild and untamed, with almost no restrictions on appearance or use and with rampant advertising and spam. For the purposes of this paper I will not go into the details of MySpace because it is a highly complex phenomenon in its own right, and only a very

few of the members of the Indian music blogging community maintain MySpace pages, whereas most participate to some degree on the forums mentioned above.

The Recording Industry after Digital Media

The Internet enables a variety of legitimate and illegitimate (according to international standards determined by the IFPI) methods of distributing music quickly, efficiently, and conveniently online. There are four major methods of music distribution on the Internet: online music stores for purchasing real media in a virtual setting, peer-to-peer file sharing networks, client-server downloading services, and streaming music services. Music bloggers will, in almost all cases I have seen, provide music in streaming format with the option to download the song as an MP3 from the server hosting the sound file.

In its various manifestations, music online has often been spoken of as a threat to the music industry, which has always worked to control every aspect of the production and sale of music recordings, and which continues to resist transition to an online business model. The recording industry engages in the business of making and distributing music recordings, from the instrument and sound equipment makers to the musicians, sound techs and recording engineers, to the corporate managers who run the major record labels. The music industry has always been dominated by just a small number of record labels, and currently the world market is dominated by the "Big Four," Universal Music Group, Sony BMG, Warner Music Group, and EMI, each of which consists of a variety of smaller labels targeted at different regions and markets

worldwide. The IFPI is an industry organisation that represents more than 1400 member companies in 75 countries (www.ifpi.org). The IFPI's primary goal is worldwide anti-piracy enforcement and litigation, as well as hosting a large amount of market research and global industry statistics; essentially they represent the corporate recording industry's interests in maintaining the domination of the major labels in recording and distributing music.

In their study of how self-production of music compares to traditional industry production, Ryan and Hughes (2006) describe the recording industry as one built around a complex collaborative process and a "decision chain" of production. In this model, there are several levels of authority through which a recording passes within a label, from sound engineers to editors to marketers. As the product passes through each stage in the decision chain it becomes more refined as a product that the label envisions as having a solid "product image" and good marketability (242).

In North America, the recording industry's first reaction to the Internet was to see it as a threat, not initially because of the possibility of digital music piracy, but because the Internet democratised the distribution process, cutting out the retailer and potentially allowing the artist to distribute their own music (Jones 217). Jones (2002) demonstrates that the geography of the North American recording industry necessitated the establishment of a third party distribution method where central distribution companies stock albums and distribute them to retailers around the continent. Whereas in the UK, where the local distribution area is much smaller, record labels often control their own retail outlets, such as with Virgin Records, reducing the need for concern over loss of control of distribution. Since the 1970s the North American recording industry has

struggled to increase profit and reduce loss within this system according to a traditional business model. Thus, the introduction of a distribution factor over which the recording industry has no control is potentially very loss inducing to the industry. While some online retailers, such as Amazon.com, often still acquire their products from major distribution centers, they also tend to offer buyers the option to purchase the same products from independent sellers at a greatly reduced price.

However, even more threatening to the industry is the prospect of artists selling their own music online, obviating the need for label representation. Although this method of self-representation is extremely time consuming for the artist because not only does one have to continue to produce music but also manage the business side of one's career, 100 percent of the profits from recording sales and performances can potentially go to the performer. While the total disintegration of the corporate recording industry is unlikely, we are already experiencing a large online music culture that exists parallel to the traditional recording industry where artists create music in their home studios, post it online, and build networks of devoted fans using tools like MySpace and personal blogs, for example Jonathan Coulton, featured in the May 13 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* (Thompson 2007).

Self-production of music, as Ryan and Hughes (2006) demonstrate, comes with an ease of production that causes the market to be flooded with recordings. While the selection of music for the listener to access has never been so great as it is now, there is such a vast quantity of music available with no industry capital to market it to potential audiences, that it becomes virtually impossible for any artist or group to achieve significant commercial success through this business model. One of the major online

spaces for community building on the Internet lies among the self-producing artists who use the Internet to market and distribute their music. Coalitions of independent artists band together in informal networks, promoting each other through blogs, online magazines, and fan sites in an effort to increase listenership and the potential for commercial success for all of the musicians in the network.

When presented with such a vast supply of music to choose from, users will gravitate to music that is most popular and has already received positive listener reviews, as demonstrated by Salganik et al (2006) in their study of unpredictability in an artificial cultural market. In their experiment they created an online environment where participants were assigned to one of four artificial "worlds" where all had access to download the same songs, but without any knowledge of the music being downloaded in the other "worlds." They determined that social influence within each world was a significant determiner in listener selection from available music, suggesting that fame partly occurs in a snowball effect, as listeners are more likely to download music that they know has already been downloaded by other people. Thus, while it is possible that through a stroke of luck self-produced artists can (very rarely) achieve wide listenership and commercial success, there is no way for them to compete with artists produced and marketed by major labels with the means to launch major advertising campaigns for their artists.

A popular and powerful method of music sharing on the Internet, and perhaps the one that has received the most media coverage, is peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing networks such as the now-defunct Napster, KaZaA, LimeWire, and BitTorrent. P2P networks can consist of any number of users, with the potential to connect to millions of

users. P2P file sharing is unique from server based music access in that it occurs on a dispersed network of "peers," or users, that serve as both "clients" and "servers" to each other (but rarely interact directly), eliminating the server overload that can happen if too many users attempt to access the same file at the same time in a client-server system. Through the use of P2P software, users make a specific folder of files on their personal computers available to the network. The files in this folder are called "seeds" and the act of making them available to the network is called "seeding". Users generally restrict the amount of bandwidth used for uploading to the network, so downloading a file from a single seed can take a very long time. Where the huge advantage of this system for users over a client-server system comes to play is that if multiple users are seeding the same file, the download for users accessing the file can happen very quickly. Also, immediately after a user begins to download a file, it begins seeding to other users. Many P2P services maintain server based tracking programs that allow users to search the files on the network. P2P networks are very powerful for sharing music because they are difficult for legal powers to regulate, and they can easily become vast reflecting an expansive library made up of the collective personal libraries of all the users on the network. The music industry has responded to P2P technology and the music piracy that it enables by filing lawsuits against both the companies providing the P2P software and against the users downloading the music, primarily college students in the United States.

Another powerful music sharing resource on the Internet is streaming radio and podcasts. Users can subscribe to feeds of these services and receive emails when updates and new posts are made, generally free of charge. Streaming radio is similar to broadband radio in that the user listens to the program at the time that it is aired over the

Internet, not by downloading the program. Podcasts can be downloaded and listened to at the user's leisure, or streamed from the website. While podcasts can contain content of any length and size, popular podcasts are most often presented as episodes of a longer narrative or discussion. Podcasts, and the related "vodcasts" (video podcasts), share many features in common with blogging, in particular that they tend to present "episodes" of some sort. The characteristic of blogs that defines them against podcasts is that they are a personal webpage that can host other multimedia in addition to text; podcasts are standalone audio files that may or may not be associated with a larger website.

Related to these two media is the video service YouTube, recently acquired by Google. YouTube allows registered users to post videos and reply to posted videos, create playlists, join groups or "channels," and embed YouTube videos in other websites such as Facebook, blogs and news sites. Google moderates the video posts closely, removing copyrighted material as it appears, as well as offensive content. YouTube has become a valuable tool for amateur and professional users alike. Amateur filmmakers post their short films on YouTube, and fans of foreign release films post subtitled works. There are vast quantities of music, both live and studio recorded, by performers of all sorts—some of the most valuable of which are bootlegged videos of rare performances that can no longer be accessed in any other format. YouTube videos can be embedded in blogs, and there are some videos of musical performances that appear on Indian music blogs, but those that are posted are mostly examples of commercial recordings or professional performances.

The method of online music sharing that has garnered the greatest commercial success for the recording industry is client-server pay-per-song systems such as Apple's iTunes. iTunes is an extremely popular service, largely because of Apple's iPod franchise—iPods will only work with the iTunes software. The iTunes music store licenses music from record labels and then offers it on the site for download by song or by album, for the somewhat inflated price of $0.99 per song. Apple offers spotlighted songs, artists, and albums for additional fees from the record labels, as well as a search engine and browser for finding music. Frequent industry reports have hailed iTunes as the recording industry's biggest weapon against illegal file sharing because it is almost as convenient as file sharing, with the added bonuses of being legal and generating revenue for the industry. However, at $0.99 per song the prices are still prohibitive for many users, particularly young ones. Also, iTunes maintains separate catalogues for different countries based on licensing agreements, so users outside of the United States tend to not have as wide of a selection as those within, and according to Apple's Asian website (www.asia.apple.com) the iTunes music store is not even available for Asian customers, including those located in India.

Blogging

Blogging is unique among these online spaces for sharing music because in this format the blogger is the agent of the content. Whereas forums and social networks require users to conform to certain standards of topical content and visual appearance, blog space is individually maintained and can be personalised while still adhering to a

standarised method of delivery and format. A blog (short for weblog) is characterised by the format of posts appearing in reverse chronological order, with the most recent entry at the top of the page. Many types of files can be embedded in blog posts, including sound files, images and videos, as well as links to other websites in order to enrich the blog content. Blogs are usually hosted by blogging services that provide templates and a user-friendly interface. While there are currently several organisations that provide blogging services, by far the most widely used among music bloggers is Google's Blogger, a free service that is very easy to use; others are Wordpress and Moveable Type. Blogs allow for an interesting reader (or listener)-author feedback process through two channels: one is cross-blog discussion through linking between blogs, and the other is in-blog activity through commenting on posts (Karlsson 301). These feedback channels allow for the creation of informal blogging networks where all the authors are connected together through links and comments from each other's blogs.

All of the music blogs I could find that are by authors of North American or European heritage are fan blogs dedicated to promoting the music made by the artists they admire. The most popular of these blogs are updated daily and contain clips of the bands and sometimes videos of their performances. Some, such as Side-Line (www.side-line.com) are very professional in appearance, even though they are run by dedicated amateur bloggers. Interestingly, the music blog that appears at the top of the list on every blog tracker that comes up in a Google search for "music blog" is one called "Download Hindi Songs," a blog that specialises in making available copyrighted film music for download by fans, with close to 80 thousand unique visitors, although this is the only blog of Asian or South Asian origin that appears in the list.

A music blog, in the South Asian context, is an online personal webpage where the author posts songs they have recorded. Though it is difficult to say for certain, the precedent for this use of blog space seems to lie in Western fan-style music blogs. In Indian music blogs the author is most often a singer and has recorded his or her voice over a karaoke track of a popular film song. Occasionally singers will post original songs or classical songs performed over just a drone. While some authors use their blogs for posting both music and diary entries, the majority maintain separate blogs for music and writing. In each blog the author provides a set of links to other blogs that they visit regularly. There is a very strong sense of community among the Indian music bloggers in my study, and groups of them who live near each other have arranged to meet in person intermittently, which serves to strengthen the community bonds. For most of the bloggers whom I have spoken to, blogging is their primary public musical outlet—meaning they perform publicly in other contexts rarely, if at all—and the blogging community is a major part of their social life.

Blogs also present an interesting space that is at the same time private and public, confounding traditional distinctions between public and private functions of textual communication (McNeill 26). Blogs, like print autobiographies, are simultaneously public and private forms because they "paint an intimate portrait of the author and yet publish that portrait to thousands of anonymous readers" (Bolter in Killoran 67). Blog authors generally write for a targeted public audience, but often share very intimate private details of their lives, putting themselves in a very vulnerable position with the expectation that their readers will trust and understand the nuances of their writing (Karlsson 305). In the case of music blogging, the authors post recordings of themselves

performing and open the floor for feedback, positive and negative. Bloggers enter into an "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune 124) with listeners, an understanding that the listeners will accept the music posted as a genuine expression of the singer's musical traditions, and that the listener will make informed and honest comments.

There is a "perceived egotistical preoccupation and the stigma of a divulged, socially marginalized lifestyle" (Killoran 69) attached to web diarists because they choose to publish intimate, and often banal, details of their life in a public forum. As web diarists do not need to prove their marketability in order to get published (McNeill 25), "the audience is not only anticipated, but expected, and thus influences and structures the very manner in which the writer articulates, composes, and distributes the self-document... they actually become media objects—self-styled celebrities to be distributed, evaluated, and ranked" (Kitzmann 56). Blogs are a discursive environment that privilege the present, and bloggers perform the private/public divide for a responsive audience in a continuous present (Kitzmann 62). For Indian music bloggers, who often divulge very little autobiographical information in the form of text, the private element being performed can be very subtle, appearing in references to favourite songs and the influences of those songs on the author and the musical expression of those details.

There is a general notion of the Internet that "if you build it, they will come;"[5] that building a blog or website, or posting music will be enough to ensure that people will visit the site. However, this is not the case in most instances. Ensuring readership for a blog requires some effort in networking and connecting to other blogs and referencing other bloggers. In order to reach out to the broadest audience, the blogger must

[5] This observation is based on casual conversations with colleagues, as well as personal experience of this sentiment and having seen it from others in online contexts.

familiarise himself with the other blogs of similar subject matter, and get involved in those blogs by commenting on them and referencing them in his own blog. Also, search engines such as Google sort search results based on a hierarchy determined in part by links to a particular site, thus if bloggers ensure that other sites and blogs link to the author's blog their chances of reaching a wider audience improve because their blog will rank higher in the results from Google searches. That said, circumstances will occasionally arrive by chance under which a web site, blog, or video suddenly sees a massive peak in readership. This is usually caused by the linking of another popular site to the one in question, as well as the networks created through forum communities and email networks.

Creating a Music Blog

The technology involved in music blogging has become increasingly easy to use over the last several years, such that anyone with basic computer skills can learn the steps to produce a music blog. Earlier forms of music sharing online required some very specific knowledge and a high proficiency in applying that knowledge, for example the online "mod" scene documented by Lysloff (2003) where users created music files, or "mods," using MIDI technology and shared them via specially designed trackers. While blogs do not enable the same sense of closed community that was seen in Lysloff's "mod" scene, they are considerably easier for first time users to create and access.

The first step in creating a music blog is to create a free account with a blogging service such as Google's Blogger (www.blogger.com). Blogger's very user-friendly

graphical interface will guide you through the steps of creating an appearance for your blog and writing the first post. Posts are written in plain text format, and no knowledge of HTML code is required for formatting. The second step is to create an account with an audio hosting service such as Hipcast (www.hipcast.com), most of which require a small monthly subscriber fee. The audio hosting service provides server space where the songs can be stored and linked to from the blog, because Blogger does not provide this service. The next step is to record the song. This can be done using a program such as Audacity, a free, open-source sound editing program, and any microphone connected to the computer. The next step is to upload the song to the audio hosting site and post a link to the file in the blog. An applet (small, embedded application) with play controls will appear in the blog post along with whatever other information the author posts.

Technology and Musical Space

Music blogging exists in an entirely virtual medium, yet the practice of music blogging is embodied by the people who use the technology to make their recordings and share them with the music blogging community. The music blogging community exists only in an online space, but the bloggers use the technology to connect to each other and build their community in the "bridgespace" across real places. The shape of the music blogging community is determined, to a large extent, by the capabilities of the technology; users can not create new musical spaces on the Internet that are not supported by current technology without developing the technology to suit their needs. However, Indian music blogging is a unique example of like-minded people working together

across the Internet to develop the use of the common online tool of blogging, normally used for publishing text, in an innovative way to satisfy their need to share their own performances of the music that they love. The music and the community are inextricable from the technology that allows them to exist in this online space; personal computers, the Internet and recording software are absolutely vital to life of this community. However, it is real, embodied people who manipulate the technology to allow them to create and share their music.

III. Ethnography: *United in Music*

> What I love about blogging is that it is a platform on which I can express myself with absolute freedom. There is not censorship or editor's cut… I wouldn't want my regular readers to be disappointed, so I keep on text blogging and music blogging. (email from Joseph Thomas, 23 August 2007)

Internet Ethnography

Ethnography conducted over the Internet introduces many new challenges that traditional fieldwork methodology has not yet come to answer. Issues such as the nature of the relationships that occur online, self-representation, and textualisation of communication all limit and change the amount and kinds of information that can be gathered in an Internet ethnography. At the same time there are new and enlightening opportunities for gathering extensive information on the field from the public archives of the websites in the study. Due to the textual nature of online material, a detailed record of all the communication that occurs on websites is stored in public archives, so that it is possible (with enough time) to reconstruct the history of the online networks precisely as they were originally seen. However, these web archives are not permanent fixtures, and can disappear if support for the website is cut off.

I approached this ethnography with a great deal of trepidation, unsure of how to "break in" to such a vast, and in many ways unknowable, field, especially as I began with very loose parameters for my field, unsure of what I might find. I tried many different

field methods in an attempt to uncover online musical practices: an online survey, creating my own blog, posting in forums and on message boards, and performing endless Google searches. Ultimately my breakthrough happened when I found BlogSwara and started emailing individual bloggers who had contributed to the project and reading their blogs.

Besides the element of language barrier (my consultants speak English fluently as a second language, but I do not speak their first languages), the intercultural differences between me and the music bloggers did not seem to interfere with my ability to learn about music blogging and interact with members of the community. While our intercultural differences could have been elided in our correspondence, I chose to address our differences openly with the hopes that my humility and honesty would help to stimulate more involved responses to my questions through a desire to help me understand the music and community culture as fully as possible.

Blogs provide an interesting object of study because the authors reveal so much about themselves through the text, music and page appearance, but necessarily in an incomplete way due to the various restrictions of space and medium. Blogging has evolved into a genre that easily supports autobiographical content, and it is generally assumed that the authors of music blogs are writing and singing in a way that is true to themselves and their personalities—in an "authentic" way. A blogger's authenticity is assumed by regular readers and listeners, and people who misrepresent themselves on the Internet are often met with a feeling of betrayal by readers that has at times been so strong as to enter into mainstream media. There have been notable examples of blog authors deliberately misrepresenting themselves in order to achieve upward mobility and

commercial success through notoriety in mainstream media,[6] but most often they will just lose their readers. In spite of this assumed authenticity on the part of both the author and the audience, self-representation is always limited to what is shown, and it is tailored to create the image that the author (consciously or subconsciously) wants to show the audience.

Another aspect of the Internet that makes it unique as an ethnographic field is that the ethnographer can see the field exactly as the participants see it and can access it in the same ways. Ethnography is done at the researcher's convenience, and interviews that would take just a few hours in person can take weeks via email. I have not had any face to face interactions with my research consultants; we have not met in person and are not likely to, neither have we had any spoken conversations. The field is fast and slow at the same time—it can completely change into something new overnight, but communicating about that change can take several emails over a month or more. Also, the scope of the field is difficult comprehend because the researcher sees it through a small screen in her office, when in fact it could potentially be shared with millions of people around the world simultaneously. Lysloff calls this the "Softcity," "a deserted metropolis where I find traces of life everywhere, but no people, no living bodies" (2003: 23). There is evidence of the vast number of privileged users who have access to the Internet in their words and images posted on their websites, and at times it can be difficult not to conflate these artifacts with the real people who have placed them there. Identity is constructed through text and images deliberately placed in online spaces where the user expects to

[6] One of the most well known examples of this reaction is to lonelygirl15 (www.lonelygirl15.com), who maintained a widely viewed video blog on YouTube for some time before her audience learned that she was a fictitious character named Bree being played by actress Jessica Rose. Fans of her blog began discussion that it was a hoax, and after she was "outed" she gave interviews on national television. She has since been cast in several major network television shows.

encounter likeminded people—or at least the textual artifacts left behind by those people. Although the interactions that occur online are mediated to this extreme degree, when one participates in them it is easy to forget that they are mediated and to accept them as genuine interaction, much like we have with the telephone (Lysloff 31)

There are several issues and complications related to the nature of blogging as a research subject. Primarily, there is the fact that it is extremely temporary. While the author may feel at the time of writing as though they are leaving a permanent mark on the world, in fact anything on the Internet can disappear or become inaccessible in an instant. In order to avoid massive data loss, the hosting services will maintain backup copies of everything published to their sites, however, it is within their rights (in the case of a free service) to simply end the service and bring down the servers, deleting everything saved on them. While it is unlikely that a company as large as Google would risk the backlash of such an action, it is not out of the realm of possibility. Thus, the entire online world exists in a sort of limbo, even if it does not enter into the awareness of the users beyond concerns for the integrity of their own computer hardware.

On a smaller scale, individual users also have to ability to delete their blogs and associated archives at any time, erasing their primary presence from the online world. However, if any copies have been made of their posted content, those copies can be virtually impossible to track down and erase. This sense temporariness makes large-scale Internet projects somewhat more tenuous. Even in the case where the people running the project own the means of production for the project, such as the server and web developers to build the project, a poorly timed power outage or failure to back up the files can still cause severe damage to the system, and corruption or loss of the files. On the

other hand, all of the blogging services allow users to maintain an archive of posts, so that readers can browse through them. This structure makes it possible for the researcher to go through, post by post, the entire history of a blogging network and document how it grew and the relationships formed in it.

There are a few ethical issues that arise in this process. As the information is published in a public forum the researcher does not require permission to use it as long as it is cited. However, if a published work is removed from public forum, is it still acceptable for the researcher to cite it if he or she has downloaded a copy of the text and saved it? In this instance it seems to me as though it is similar to removing a book from print; copies of the book still remain even though new ones are no longer being made, and of the copies that remain out in the world's libraries and bookstores, it is perfectly acceptable to use them for research purposes. However, this situation also shares familiar territory with products being recalled. It is the consumer's choice whether or not to return the recalled product, but the company no longer authorises its use for whatever reason. I believe that in this instance, the most ethical action would be to attempt to contact the author to request specific permission to cite their work, and barring that possibility, to remove the blog from consideration as a source.

Production in Music Blogs

As a musical project created and rendered entirely in digital code by artists in dispersed locations, the production of BlogSwara albums is unique in the recording industry. The traditional recording process involves going to the studio to record the

various instrumental tracks and do the final mixing. In the early days of studio recordings, musicians would be recorded playing together, just as they would in a live performance, but through multi-track recording techniques musicians are able to record each instrumental track separately, a process that has enabled increasing disjuncture in studio recordings because tracks need not be recorded on the same day or in the same place. Expanding on the notion of displacement of musical elementals in creating cohesive musical recordings, Théberge (2004) examines the historical processes leading to the much acclaimed Rocket Network, a studio that offered "server-based technology that allowed multiple users to access and update digital audio files via the Internet" (759). The Rocket Network created a new musical milieu in which it was possible for entire musical works to be recorded and mixed in almost real-time collaboration by contributors dispersed around the world (760). Not only did the Rocket Network introduce the possibility of collaboration between dispersed music studios, but it also opened the door for the bypassing of the music studio altogether. As high quality recording equipment and computer software became increasingly affordable during the 1990s, independent musicians who valued the ability to be the sole creative decision makers in the production of their own music began recording, producing and releasing their own music.

In the traditional recording industry studio setting, the method of production is a blend of specialised industrial assembly line production and craft production requiring high skill and experienced judgment, described by Ryan and Hughes (2006) as a "product image" mode of production. They describe musical recordings as being created in a "decision chain" of production, wherein the job of the worker at each stage of production, from songwriting to mixing to marketing, is to adjust the "product" to suit an image

acceptable to the workers in the next step of the decision chain (242). The final image that the product must meet is determined by the record label based on their interpretation of market research done on the target audience, with the understanding that a product with a perfectly targeted image will mostly likely have the best sales; "commercially recorded music has been the outcome of a complex collaborative editing process… throughout most of the history of the industry" (Ryan and Hughes 243). The Rocket Network paved the way for fully self-produced recordings by providing the first tools enabling musicians to edit and mix their own music (Théberge 2004: 759). In the case of self-produced music, the decision chain gets turned upside down and the artist gets to have final creative control over their image and the image portrayed in their recordings. There are currently numerous online services targeted at self-producing artists offering, for a fee, to provide subscription download services, marketing, and concert tour promotion among every other step in the traditional decision chain. While every step in the production of a recording remains the same, in self-produced music the "product image" lies in the hands of the artist rather than the record label, and the various online services are contracted by the artist rather than being hierarchically distributed above the artist in a corporate setting.

BlogSwara is an example of a self-produced, collaborative music project. Every element of the decision chain is controlled by a panel of representatives from the music blogging community, and the process of building the product image is highly democratised. One advantage that BlogSwara has as a non-commercial product is that there is no sense of urgency when it comes to getting noticed by potential listeners. Self-produced artists lack the cultural capital, and often the financial means, of reaching

widespread audiences, so they rarely have strong commercial potential unless they are extremely lucky in gaining wide recognition through the Internet. Also, the target audience is a relatively small network of music bloggers, although they have achieved some recognition outside of that community.

Licensing

The music published by BlogSwara (and also on some of the personal blogs) is licensed under a Creative Commons license. Creative Commons (CC) is an organisation started in 2001 by lawyers Lawrence Lessig, James Boyle, and Michael Carroll; computer scientist Hal Abelson; publisher Eric Eldred and others (Kelty 549) that provides free licensing primarily for works published online and for academic works. The motivation among these founding members is to respect intellectual property rights while balancing them with the original purpose of copyright: to protect the rights of the creators long enough for them to earn reasonable remuneration for their product, and then to have the product move into the public domain to allow for constant flow of ideas and fodder for new creative projects. The original term of copyright was fourteen years with the option to extend the term by an additional fourteen years, however through the process of several legislations throughout the 20th Century, largely at the behest of major corporations such as Disney and computer software firms, and individuals such as Sonny Bono, the term of copyright has been extended to life of the author plus 70 years for single author works, and 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation, whichever is shorter, for corporate or anonymous works. CC is an unconventional effort on the part

of Lessig and his co-creators to assault this extreme extension of intellectual property rights outside of the courts.

Essentially, Creative Commons licenses allow authors to change the rights to their work from "all rights reserved" to "some rights reserved" so that they can make an informed decision to place their work in a position to fit more easily into the flow of ideas and knowledge fundamental to the ideals of a liberal democracy. By using a CC license the author removes copyright protection that is granted by default to every work published in any format, even without registering. Rights that can be granted to users include the right to copy and share, the right to make derivative works, and it can even be used to place a work directly into the public domain. Normally, in order to publicly perform a published work, reproduce a copyrighted design or text, et cetera, users must contact the licensing organisation, such as the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN) or the American Society of Composers Authors and Publishers (ASCAP)[7], in order to purchase a license specific to the desired use. CC circumvents this process by embedding the license within the work itself. In the case of electronic artifacts protected by a CC license, a file with the license information gets copied with the artifact each time it is reproduced, so that users can easily determine what rights they have to the artifact. CC licenses are non-exclusive and the restrictions placed on a file by the CC license can be waived or changed by contacting the author of the work and arranging for a new, non-exclusive license.

BlogSwara licenses its music using a Creative Commons license that allows for free downloading and sharing of the music provided that attribution to the original

[7] These organisations manage the licenses and royalty payments for copyrighted work that is registered with them.

authors is always given, the use is non-commercial, and no derivative works are made of the songs. There is a small file attached to each song that defines these rights, and which also keeps a record of the song in a large CC database that can be searched for any items licensed with CC. The licenses are free for download and totally customisable to the authors needs, but do not come with legal support or defense in the case of copyright infringement. However, the licenses can be used as proof of authorship in the case of a copyright infringement lawsuit, and there is a clause written in that if any part of the license is not in line with local copyright law the rest of the license will still be valid.

In the academic law community and also in popular music magazines such as *Billboard* there is a great deal of disagreement over the benefits and potential harms of licensing music with a CC license. The main benefits of CC licenses for users are the ease with which rights are granted and the knowledge that all users should be aware of those rights. As with traditional copyright, the licenses can tell users what it is acceptable for them to do with a work, but the licenses can not *force* the users to act in any way or another—they rely on the users' own cultural understanding of right and wrong, and assume a desire to adhere to those standards (Kelty 553). Often, novice or amateur musicians will license their work with CC so that they can reach a broader audience in the hopes that they will become a paying audience in the future. In spite of these pros, detractors to CC list numerous cons of using these licenses, mainly based on the expectation that users will be uninformed. First, while the Creative Commons website (www.creativecommons.org) explains, mostly in layman's language, the terms of the licenses, the detractors assume that not all users will thoroughly familiarise themselves with these terms, or will not fully understand the legal ramifications of the terms. The

licenses are legally binding and once a work is licensed, that license can not be removed if the author changes his or her mind about the rights they want to have carried with their work, although it can be released again under a license with different terms. However, with the case of works published on the Internet, a potentially infinite number of copies can be made and shared of the work under the original license, unlike with offline media. Also, the license expires after fourteen years, at which point the work license can be renewed for one additional term or else it enters into the public domain and the author ceases to have any rights over the work. Finally, the argument proposed most often by representatives of the music industry is that novice musicians may lose out on significant potential financial remuneration for their work by offering it for free sharing instead of for sale (Butler 2005).

In the case of BlogSwara, the bloggers that I corresponded with told me that they use CC licenses as a ways to "showcase their music online... and protect [their] own creative work from being used commercially [by people other than the author]" (email from Joseph Thomas, 2 August 2007). There seems to be an understanding that CC licenses actually provide *more* copyright protection than the default copyright, when in fact the opposite is true because CC licenses allow the work to have "some rights reserved" rather than "all rights reserved," as is the case with default copyright. However, the bloggers also appreciate the clause that allows sharing with attribution, and here again we see the cultural assumption that users will respect the desires of the author and not use their work for any use outside of the terms of the license. While this is the case with all manners of copyright, CC licenses are generally used by small organisations and authors without the means to enter into litigation if copyright infringement occurs.

While it is difficult to say for certain, it is most likely that the power of the CC license for BlogSwara and other bloggers is in the little extra notice attached to the music indicating which uses are acceptable to the author and which are not, thus pushing the users to adhere to the terms by engaging their consciences.

Methodology

In keeping with my previous fieldwork experience with the Indian diaspora, my initial idea for this research was to search for expressions of Indian devotional music on the Internet and to find ways that devotional groups were using the Internet. I entered into my research field as one would enter into a new and changing offline field—by exploring what musical expressions actually take place online. I began with extensive Google searches, using basic keywords such as "Indian devotional" and "bhajans," expanding my keyword searches based on the search results. I also followed links from many of the sites that appeared in search results, generally getting a feel for the online world created by and for Indian people in India and abroad. Unlike live performance venues in offline contexts, there are no musicians found where the music is online, and while I could usually find a method of contacting the people who posted music in the online spaces that I encountered, there was no guarantee that they would respond to my inquiries. In impersonal online communication it is much easier for a potential research consultant to ignore me if my request is inconvenient than it is in offline contexts where I am standing in front of the person, not to mention that the people with whom I attempted to correspond with had little way to verify my identity.

I made my first effort to begin corresponding with members of online music communities before I had narrowed my field to music blogging. I developed a survey of basic questions on music sharing practices online[8], and hosted it from a blog that I created[9] to track my research process and post sources. I had hoped that the blog would become a feedback forum for my research consultants to comment on my theories and conclusions as I developed them, but I was not able to stimulate any sort of public discussion on my research, perhaps partly due to my somewhat infrequent posting practice due to my reluctance to post semi-formed conclusions in a public context. As I encountered discussion forums during my searches, I would register for the forums and create a post about my research with a link to the survey, inviting readers to participate in my research project. The survey responses came in small bursts of three or four at a time before the forum thread I created got knocked from view on the first page. I received a total of only fourteen responses, which I entered into a spreadsheet with the expectation that eventually I would receive enough responses to generalise about the music sharing habits of Indian people online. However, I learned that finding survey respondents is far more challenging than I initially expected it to be, and requires actively soliciting responses daily from Internet users.

As the questions on my survey were of a very general nature, I chose to use them instead as a gateway into the online practices that respondents listed, some of which I had overlooked or underestimated in earlier searches. Several of the respondents listed BlogSwara.com as a site that they visited often to access music online, and as I explored BlogSwara.com and followed the links from that site through the network of music

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[8] See Appendix 5 for the list of Survey Questions and sample responses.

[9] Upon concluding my research I took down my research blog for matters of privacy.

bloggers who contributed to it, I became increasingly aware of how rich a musical community it is.

My exploration of the music blogging community began by visiting every blog linked from the BlogSwara website, and then visiting every blog linked from each of those blogs, reading and listening to excerpts of most of the posts on each blog. I later found the blog *Audio India* (www.audioindia.blogspot.com), maintained by Jo, which tracks all the Indian music blogs in the community and posts each time a new song is posted by any of the bloggers on the list with links to the songs. After I found this blog, I compiled a spreadsheet of information posted by bloggers on where they live, where they are from in India, their genders, and the genres of music that they post[10]. While this data would make an interesting case for a social networking study because it is possible to quantitatively analyze the growth and shape of the community based on the archives published in each blog, I chose to take a more qualitative approach to the information I gathered through interaction with research consultants and by focusing on them as individuals who give meaning to a musical practice rather than as statistics.

All through this process of web research, I attempted to contact every active music blogger whose blog I read and listened to. I favoured email as the medium for attempting to open discussion with bloggers, but in the case that a blogger did not post an email address I would comment on their most recent blog post, knowing from experience that they would receive and email notice of my comment. I heard back from very few of the bloggers, and only carried on detailed and lengthy discussions with Joseph Thomas

[10] See Appendix 2 for the spreadsheet and a summary of the data.

and Sindhuja Bhathavatsalam. However, both Jo and Sindhuja provided me with thoughtful, detailed answers to my questions.

Throughout my research I made a strong attempt at reciprocity in my correspondence with Jo and Sindhuja. Both often asked me questions about myself and about my research, and I answered as thoroughly as I could. Also, Jo invited me to guest post on his blog about Creative Commons on 25 August 2007[11], which received some interesting comments. My correspondence with both Jo and Sindhuja became very friendly and personal at times, and I formed relationships with both that are similar in many ways to the relationships I formed with my research consultants during my previous fieldwork in Edmonton.

BlogSwara

> BlogSwara is a unique and pioneering concept wherein amateur Indian music talent from worldwide collaboratively work on creating full scale original music productions completely remotely. The music produced is made available free for listening. Most of the artists involved have not met each other and some not even talked to each other over the phone. All artist communications are made possible using personal e-mails. (unitedinmusic.blogspot.com)

According to the BlogSwara website: "BlogSwara started as a collaborative musical endeavor by a group of Indian bloggers around the world" (www.blogswara.com). To date, this group of music bloggers, led by my primary

[11] http://jocalling.blogspot.com/2007/08/creative-commons-pros-and-cons.html

research consultant Joseph Thomas, have created four full-length albums of original music that are available free for download under a Creative Commons license that gives permissions for sharing the music freely as long as it is not for commercial use and is attributed to the original authors. "BlogSwara" is the name for both the albums and the group people who contributed to them, and BlogSwara.com is the platform for their collaboration. The albums have been released approximately every six months since March of 2006, the most current album having been released in December of 2007. BlogSwara is a unique endeavor among music bloggers because it is the first documented instance of a group of dispersed music bloggers working together to produce non-commercial original music. Whereas the majority of music bloggers post karaoke recordings in their personal blogs, BlogSwara consists new compositions composed and recorded collaboratively between bloggers. Music blogging is a leisure activity practiced in the bloggers' spare time, and BlogSwara maintains the same casual atmosphere found on personal blogs while presenting a new and exciting challenge for veteran music bloggers.

> BlogSwara has been more challenging than my personal blog ventures since I'm singing an original song here. When you do cover versions of songs (which is the case with most songs on my blog), you've heard the song rendered by someone else before, usually many, many times, so you're all familiar with it… But this is not the case with BlogSwara – I'm singing the song myself, for the first time. (email from Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam, 15 October 2007)

Although the time and effort invested in the production of BlogSwara by the contributors are significant, the capital accrued by the artists is entirely symbolic. Within the music

blogging community the BlogSwara contributors are the most respected and active bloggers with the widest interactive audience base.

Production for each BlogSwara album begins with the announcement of deadlines and release dates. After the dates are announced, bloggers interested in contributing to the album begin preparing proposals for songs. The musicians find each other through the music blogging network, and of their own accord arrange to collaborate on a song for the album. There is generally one person who invites the other bloggers to collaborate and acts as a leader in organising the collaboration. If that person is a singer, he will request lyrics from a lyricist, a tune from a composer, and orchestration from somebody who is able to record the instrumental track. The orchestrator will mix the instrumental track, and then provide two copies of it to the singer, one with the vocal melody and one without. The vocalist will then record his part and send it back to the orchestrator for final mixing. Often a musician will fill more than one of these roles, or the roles may be split among even more people. Most of the communication will be done via email. Since BlogSwara Version 2 entries from non-blogging musicians and bands have been accepted, and one or two of the songs on each subsequent album may be non-collaborative recordings from these artists.

The recorded songs are submitted to a panel of judges made up of active music bloggers, lead by Jo. For BlogSwara Version 4 there will be fourteen panel members, but according to Jo there will be more panel members added for future albums as talented music bloggers become known in the community. The panel is anonymous, and I was not given a list of panel members. Panel members may submit songs for the album, and their songs undergo the same selection process as every other song. The panel members

award a rating of 0-10 to each song in the categories of Freshness, Arrangement, Vocals and Expressiveness, Recording Quality, Lyrics and Acceptability to BlogSwara (email from Joseph Thomas, 26 July 2007). The panelists may or may not correspond to discuss the submissions, each panelist awards points individually and may do so without communicating his or her thoughts on the songs to other panelists. The songs with the top scores are selected for the album. While BlogSwara Version 1 contained only songs recorded by amateur musicians, the panel opened up the door to contributions from professional musicians as well as amateurs for subsequent versions. There is a strong expectation of professionalism in the recordings, even from the amateurs, and a significant effort is made by the contributors to refine their contributions to a level of professionalism that they feel would be acceptable on major label recordings.

Jo has expressed to me how vital it is to the music bloggers that BlogSwara contains songs from multiple languages, a value which is clear in the project's slogan "United in Music". There are a large number of different languages spoken in India and the contributors place a lot of value in having representation on the album from all the major languages spoken by the contributors; the fourth album will have songs in Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, and English. The South Indian languages have the largest representation on each album, and in fact some of the recordings the songs in Hindi are not performed by native Hindi speakers, but by South Indian singers, for example "Shikwe Gile" from BlogSwara V1 and "Hai Mera Dil" from BlogSwara V2 were both sung by Pradip Somasundaran, whose first language is Malayalam. On a few occasions, some of the BlogSwara songs have been translated into other Indian languages rerecorded by interested bloggers. For example, the song "Hai Mera Dil" from BlogSwara Version

2, originally written in Hindi with lyrics by Ajay Chandran, was rerecorded after the album release with Malayalam lyrics by Sreeja Balaraj. These translated recordings are posted in the BlogSwara blog (www.unitedinmusic.blogspot.com).

After the final versions of the selected songs have been submitted, they are published on the BlogSwara website (www.blogswara.com) in MP3 format. The published songs can then be accessed as streaming music files or downloaded for listeners to burn to a CD or listen to on their computers or personal MP3 players. The albums are primarily marketed through word of mouth in the blogging community. Interested bloggers post a review of the album on their personal blogs, and through the network of bloggers the album eventually becomes widely known among its target audience. Also, BlogSwara has maintained an active fan base by posting updates to progress on upcoming albums as well as allowing comments to be posted on all of the albums. BlogSwara's strong efforts at fostering a sense of community through interaction between fans and contributors, most of whom are all music bloggers, has served to strengthen the bonds in the broader Indian music blogging community. From the BlogSwara website there is a link to the list of positive media reviews made in online magazines that are an excellent source of free publicity for BlogSwara.

While BlogSwara does have a blog that is updated infrequently, their albums are posted on a dedicated website. The website is housed on a shared server with limited bandwidth availability. The server space and web design are supplied by a store in Chennai called Connexions, which has supported BlogSwara since the first album was released. BlogSwara's songs are posted both for download and to listen to as streaming

audio. The lyrics are listed for each track, transliterated into roman script but not translated from the original language.

The Music Blogging Community

The group of music bloggers who are the subject of this study all claim a connection to Indian culture, and most claim direct familial lineage in or from India. All the bloggers record music in Indian genres such as film music, Carnatic and Hindustani classical music, and devotional music. Why focus on Indian music blogging? Within the entire blogging world, there are people from every place who post music blogs, and many have extremely high readership. However, after extensive searching, I was unable to find any music blogs other than these Indian ones used for posting recordings of the blogger's own music in an amateur, non-commercial format. The vast majority of music blogs on the Internet are focused on introducing and reviewing indie bands or posting gossip, songs and videos by major label recording artists. The Indian music blogging community is one truly centered around making and sharing music for the pleasure of singing, listening, and growing musically.

The Indian music blogging community can not be thought of as only an *Indian community* that is being manifested online, they are also an *online community* whose members are Indian. This distinction is important, because the dual nature of the Indian music blogging community as *both* Indian and online is one of the key elements that contributes to the complexity of this community. Thus, the community boundaries lie with the users' shared identities as Indian bloggers; just being either Indian or a blogger

is not enough to earn a place in this community. Every element in this ethnographic field is informed by both aspects of this dual community identity. Indian music blogging creates a middle ground between the Westernising influence of the Internet and the Indianising influence of this community's self-expression on the Internet.

Of the 79 active Indian music blogs tracked by my primary research consultant Joseph Thomas on his blog (www.audioindia.blogspot.com)[12], there are 64 male authors and 33 female authors (some have shared authorship but most are single-authored), 35 self-identify as living in South India, 11 self-identify as living abroad but coming from South India, 3 bloggers are confirmed North Indian. 23 self-identify as living abroad with unlisted Indian origin, and 9 are in unknown locations. Of the unknown bloggers, I suspect that more than half of them are actually of South Indian origin based on the languages that they sing in most frequently. The large South Indian presence in the audioblogosphere is probably because of the major information technology (IT) boom taking place in South India. In particular, the cities of Bangalore, Chennai, and Trivandrum are major IT centers, but the boom has had technological influence even in small, poor towns where many people can access the Internet in public Internet cafes (email from Joseph Thomas, 9 November 2007). Huge numbers of young people are becoming computer literate in these areas and gaining employment with outsourcing companies or moving abroad to work in the IT industry. They earn relatively high wages, have the disposable income to purchase a personal computer, and the time to use it for leisure activities if they choose, "Most youngsters live, eat and drink 'work'… But

[12] See Appendix 2 for documentation of the information from Audio India.

they are not worried about it because this career pays well" (email from Joseph Thomas, 9 November 2007).

Although music blogs are published in an online space and not a physical place, place does deserve a mention here as there are significant trends in where the bloggers live. Nearly half of the music bloggers (30 of 76, all but three of which are in US) could be considered Non-Resident Indians (NRI) because they live abroad in the Indian diaspora, and 34 of 76 live in the IT hub of South India. While the Internet is hailed as a tool that can connect people globally, in the case of music blogging it seems to be primarily connecting people from two locales. This groundedness in geography among these music bloggers is almost entirely unspoken, and mostly referenced through the use of Indian regional dialects and songs from regional media. The unspoken nature of these geographic relations points to two interesting aspects of the blogging community: among the bloggers there is a strong sense that they are "*United in Music*, not in the name of their race, region, or religion" (email from Joseph Thomas, 17 October 2007), and yet there is also an assumption that the majority of listeners will be able to understand the languages and musical genres of the songs, both somewhat specific to South India. While, as someone who has never visited India, I do not have a firm grasp on the Indian notion and politics of diversity, having grown up in multicultural Canada I understand that certain boundaries of religion and language must often be elided in order to create a broader sense of community among people with shared interests and values. The Indian music blogging community has crossed these boundaries to a certain extent and created a community based on a shared love of music and shared national identity.

The people who participate in music blogging are generally very interested in

music offline as well as online, and use their blogs as a way of reaching a broader audience than they are able to offline, "I choose to blog since it helps me to reach out far and wide, and primarily because I do not perform much otherwise" (email from Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam, 24 September 2007). Most are amateur performers, though some have several years of music training in Carnatic music, and a small number of them perform in public events occasionally. Many of them say that they came to music blogging on the recommendation of a colleague or friend who already has a music blog. Everyone who posts their motivation for blogging claims that it is a musical outlet that allows them to reach audiences far and wide, and also that it is readily accessible for those who do not have a regular opportunity to practice music in real life. Though not often written of, music blogging is a way for family members in the diaspora to share their musical endeavors and demonstrate that they have maintained a connection to Indian musical culture, "[I maintain this blog] to make it possible for my family and friends back home to listen to my renditions and also share my interests with my friends here who are as crazy about music as I am!" (Vidyu, www.viyus-music.com). Also, listening to music blogs can be reminiscent of singing together with family and friends, stirring up nostalgic feelings in the listeners and singers, because the songs posted will often have been heard or sung before, for example this comment from the notes on a post of the song "Yadein Yaad Ateen Hein" in the music blog Cincivoice, "I had the opportunity to meet the legend [singer Hariharan] a couple of months when he came to Dayton Ohio for a concert… I still have my fond memories performing for the college day celebrations at Shanmukanda hall Sion" (Harshan for Cincivoice, cincivoice.blogspot.com, 13 October 2007).

The appearance or "skin" of each blog is very important as it provides the first impression of the music blogger. Bloggers try to design the blog's appearance to reflect their own personalities, as well as the music being represented on the blog. While the customisation tools offered by the blog services such as Google's Blogger and WordPress are somewhat limited, there is room for a great deal of personalisation. Most bloggers post a profile with some information about themselves such as age, gender, country of residence, and often a photograph. Many bloggers include comments and descriptions of themselves that give insight into their personalities for readers, such as "Software Engineer, Aspiring Musician, Diehard Ghazal Enthusiast" (insaneinstincts.blogspot.com), "My world is Vedanta, music, literature and fun. Welcome aboard" (swara.blogspot.com), and "Singing as long as I can remember…" (swarasthanam.blogspot.com). Of the bloggers who post where they live and where they come from in India, this profile section is where it is documented. Almost all of the music bloggers also provide a column of links to other blogs that they admire or visit frequently. It is not uncommon for bloggers to make references to other bloggers by first name in the body of their posts, but generally it is only in the context of collaboration on a song. Discussion of specific posts takes place in the "comments" sections attached to the posts.

The Songs

The songs that are posted in music blogs are mostly karaoke recordings of popular film songs, many of them from older movies. There is a strong tendency towards

recording "classic" songs, those that evoke strong nostalgic responses in the singers and listeners. The Indian film industry is the largest in the world with approximately 900 films produced yearly combined among all the film-producing regions; 877 feature length and 1177 short films were produced in 2003[13], the most recent year that the Indian Government's Central Board of Film Certification has published online statistics for. By 1931, within a decade of the introduction of sound cinema, film music became the dominant popular music idiom in India (Manuel 41). Music has always played an integral role in Indian film, and the vast majority of Indian films are musicals (Manuel 41). Film songs continue to dominate the commercial popular music industry despite the rising influence of non-film popular music recordings since the 1970s (Arnold 539), and they maintain the largest Internet presence both in terms of files available for download and in terms of fan sites and discussion forums.

The karaoke tracks for film songs used in music blogs are of varying quality, ranging from very poor sounding MIDI files to tracks that sound very much like the original recordings, depending on where they came from. There are several online services that provide karaoke tracks, such as Taranaa (www.taranaa.com) and Melam Audio (www.melamaudios.com), and some people buy CDs of karaoke tracks if they have local stores that supply them. The recordings are made using a microphone connected to the sound input on the computer. Any microphone will work, but the more serious bloggers invest in high quality microphones. The sound is mixed using a program such as Audacity, usually to adjust the levels and to add effects such as

[13] http://www.cbfcindia.tn.nic.in/statistics/statistics-page-2003-11.htm

reverberation. Most bloggers take great care to mix their tracks to sound as much like professional recordings as possible, and they take great pride in well mixed tracks.

Songs are usually chosen based on personal preference, and occasionally as requests from other bloggers. In introducing a song in a blog post, the blogger will generally list the name of the movie, the songwriter or musical producer, and the original singer, as well as a short description of why they have chosen to sing that particular song and an invitation for comments on the performance. An example of how this is posted can be seen in this post from Sindhuja's blog:

> Another undisputed gem, an absolutely soothing melody from Rahman- "en mel vizhundha mazhai thuliye" based on the soul-stirring raga Kaapi. Rahman has pretty much stuck to it other than in the interludes, where, as always he so beautifully goes astray :) I so totally enjoyed singing this one. Its so happening that every other song I put up here is Chitra's- it hasn't been deliberate! But I'm only happy and see this as my small tribute to the goddess :) I have sung this song with Murali Venkatraman, with whom it has been a long; musically enriching association. After being introduced to the blog world by him about a year ago, it was good to finally do a song with him. Thanks, Murali.
>
> Song: en mel vizhundha mazhai thuliye
>
> Film: May Maadham
>
> Music: A.R.Rahman
>
> Lyrics: Vairamuthu
>
> Singers: Jayachandran and Chitra
>
> Mixing of this version: Murali Venkatraman

Do let us know how you found it. (octaves.blogspot.com, 3 September 2007, *original formatting and spelling maintained*)

When a blogger refers to a song that they have chosen to sing as "classic," either by labeling as such or by posting the name or photo of a famous original singer, for example Vidyu's comment on the song "Mera Dil Bhi Kitna Pagal Hai," "Well, this song needs no introduction. I rate it as one of Kumar Sanu's best romantic duets and have loved it from the first time I heard it in 1991. A song which made it to the weekly Top 10 on TV for months" (Vidyu, www.vidyus-music.blogspot.com, 31 July 2007). The quality of classic can be conveyed onto the song in a few different ways. If the song is older, perhaps from a previous generation, the ability of the song to last in popular consciousness over time gives it a certain social capital in the minds of singers and listeners. Also, music that evokes nostalgic feelings and memories, possibly music from a movie of the singer's childhood or one that is associated with happy memories is considered classic. Finally, new songs that the singer believes will carry these qualities in the future will often be labeled "classic." Singing classic songs is a way for music bloggers to accrue symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990). This symbolic capital gained through song choice is heightened when the performance is well rendered, and the bloggers with the greatest symbolic capital are the most respected in the audioblogosphere. The rewards conveyed by this respect include consideration for collaborative projects by other respected bloggers, broader listenership, and increased references made to the blogger's recordings from other music blogs. However, the symbolic capital earned from a respected performance of a classic song has little value outside of the Indian music blog community.

Songs are recorded in a variety of languages, but rarely in English. I have heard references made to English songs, but have never actually heard one on a music blog. Although most of the bloggers post their blog text in English, they usually sing songs in the language of their home state in India, for example singers from Kerala tend to sing in Malayalam. However, it is quite common for singers to attempt songs that they like in different languages that they do not speak, and the other bloggers are usually very supportive of these efforts, particularly with offering help in pronunciation.

The transformation of Indian musical production from a traditional, embodied, live performance with an audience present to a purely mediated form of performance represents a strong shift in musical attitudes and acceptance. Whereas in a traditional model of musical production, the performers experience extensive interaction with other musicians while learning and preparing repertoire for a performance, music bloggers create their online performance in a very solitary way, even more solitary than with studio recording. In the live performance context, musicians receive immediate feedback from the audience, and can adjust their performance in relation to the audience response. Online, music bloggers just put out the performances as-is, and feedback rolls in (if they are lucky) over several days in the form of comments. If the listener does not enjoy the recording they will simply stop playing it.

As the level of training varies a lot among the bloggers, the quality of the performances also varies a lot, though all take music blogging seriously and claim to produce the best songs that they are capable of. On recordings by the singers with a higher level of training, they often sound very professional, sometimes as good as the original singers. Amateur performers are easy to spot through their inability to precisely

produce the nuances and inflections found in all Indian genres. This solitary nature of online music performance has influenced the values that are sought in the performance practice. Perhaps partly due to the influence of film song on music blogging, perfection of the recording quality has found a place as one of the highest priorities for music bloggers. When a musical performance is recorded and can be played over and over again any imperfections in the performance will quickly become obvious to the listener. Audiobloggers focus carefully on the pronunciation of the lyrics and accuracy of pitch and tempo. While the bloggers can use music editing programs to compensate for inaccuracies to a certain extent, most bloggers do not have extensive knowledge of these techniques and they can not make an imperfect performance sound perfect even when used by competent bloggers.

Collaborations on songs occur occasionally. These are generally initiated by one singer who wants to record a duet with another specific singer. The two singers will discuss the collaboration via email, and then each will record their own vocal track and one will mix the final version of the song. In the case of a composer or lyricist starting a collaboration, that person will generally contact the singers and provide them with the instrumental tracks. Collaborations present a larger challenge to the more experienced bloggers, as there is considerably less room for error when two voices need to be mixed together. Also, a sub-par performance would be considerably more devastating to one's reputation than a solo performance because it also affects another singer in the blogging community.

Every blog post has a space for comments on it, and each song is generally published in its own post, sometimes leading to multiple posts in a day from the most

active blogs. Listeners who are active in the community will post compliments and suggestions for how to improve the performance, and the blog author will often post replies to the comments in the comment space.

> Of course I listen to others' blogs. That's the whole point of blogging I feel: to listen to each other and appreciate and constructively criticize each other so that we are all benefited. Many of us send out email updates when we post something new on our blogs, so I make it a point to listen to those from whom I get updates and leave a comment on their blogs. (email from Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam, 19 November 2007)

The comment space is very important in creating the sense of community found among music bloggers because it is where the largest part of the discussion and personal connection occurs. Comments are generally encouraging, even those on songs posted by people who do not have much singing experience; they include messages such as these ones on a song posted by Vidyu in her blog: "beautiful song," "excellent rendition," and "you could raise your vocal volume a bit in the mix" (vidyus-music.blogspot.com, 26 September 2007). I have never encountered any "flame wars"[14] or "trolling"[15] common in other online settings. Blogging services allow the blog author to moderate the comments posted in their blog if they choose. By selecting this option the blog author receives and email when someone posts to their comment board, and they can read the post and either approve it or delete it. While it is difficult to judge how many bloggers actually moderate the comments on their blogs, it seems reasonable to assume that most

[14] Flame wars occur when one poster insults another poster and then all the posters join in either with the insults or the defense of the insulted poster. They can easily derail the original subject matter of the thread.
[15] Trolls are posters who write comments that are deliberately inflammatory with the intention of inciting arguments and derailing the forum discussion. Often the original "troll" poster will post at the end of the thread "YHBT" or "You have been trolled".

of them do because it improves the blog's security by reducing the chances of "spam" advertisements[16] being posted in the comments section and allowing the author to keep "trolls" out.

Karaoke and Meaning in Music Blogs

That the music performed in audioblogs consists largely of karaoke performances is a very interesting element of the practice of music blogging. Drew (2005) discusses karaoke in the United States as a mimetic and visceral performance, an "act of embodiment" (379) where the performer actually takes on the character of the original artist. However, karaoke in an Indian context differs in many significant respects from karaoke in Western contexts. First, Drew asserts that while in many Asian societies (including India) imitation is considered a necessary step in the acquisition of important cultural values, Western cultures value creative products of an individual mind above all else (378). India presents a mixture of these two values, perhaps partly due to the Westernising influence of their colonial history and partly due to the feudal patronage system; individual virtuosic performers are revered in the musical world, but the training process to become a star performer involves years of practicing and imitating one's teacher. Thus, Indian singers are very accepting of mimetic singing as an authentic cultural practice, and the Indian practice of karaoke performance is much more similar to the Japanese expression than the Western expression.

[16] "Spam" refers to unwanted advertisements or solicitation that are posted in forums or sent to email lists. Spam messages are usually controlled by computer programs called "robots" that go page by page through the Internet posting in every space they can access.

Second, the performances that are embodied by karaoke performance of Indian film songs were not originally pop performances by individual stars, as they are in Western karaoke performance. Indian film songs have layers of meaning embedded in the subject matter and era of release of the film, and the actors and playback singers who perform the songs. That the songs are almost always sung by playback singers and lip-synced by the actors creates a sense that although many playback singers become very famous for their work, the song doesn't belong to the original performers in the same way the Western pop performances do because of a greater appearance of shared authorship.

Karaoke performance brings with it a number of challenges for performers that are more problematic than the challenges found in the performance of original songs. It is not unusual for singers to have a difficult time finding karaoke tracks for the songs that they want to sing, and when they do track them down they are often poorly recorded and in a key uncomfortable for the singer. Also, there is no leeway for mistakes in timing or forgotten verses, as there would be when performing with live musicians. Sumi describes these challenges well in her blog,

> Karaokes are unnatural. You try to sing at a pitch that's not your natural one, you try to drown badly played parts, and try desperately with the poor man's equipment you have to match the original quality; not to mention, the learning curve associated with getting introduced to the equipment and the software for a first time karaoke singer! (www.the-cords.blogspot.com)

Songs posted in music blogs are performed with very serious attempts to achieve a high level of professionalism and there is no hint of the irony Drew (2005) describes in his work describing middle-class karaoke performance in the US. Music bloggers

understand the music they post to be authentic examples of Indian music, despite their digital and amateur nature. Allan Moore (2002) posits that authenticity essentially lies in the truthfulness of the message presented by the artist. He argues that authenticity is ascribed to music rather than inherent in it; that perceived authenticity is a response to the music by the listener or the artist. Moore presents three approaches to understanding the criteria for authenticity, "that the artists speak the truth of their own situation; that they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and that they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (present) others" (209). He calls these aspects the authenticity of expression, execution, and experience respectively; they are not mutually exclusive and they are dependent upon which of the perspectives is being authenticated. It follows that the songs posted in music blogs can be considered authentic because the performers and listeners both consider them authentic expressions of Indian music. The question of authenticity is important because it underscores the meaning of this music for the participants.

For music bloggers, practicing music that they can think of as an authentic expression of Indian culture reinforces their Indian identity. Almost half the South Asian music bloggers listed on *Audio India* (www.audioindia.blogspot.com) live outside of India, a large enough number to qualify them for a moment of special treatment in this paper. A diaspora is defined as "a transnational network of dispersed political subjects" (Werbner 121) and Mallapragada (2006) argues that with the increasing connectivity introduced with the Internet notions of "home, homeland, and homepage" are becoming increasingly conflated. I would suggest that it is not so much a case of these ideas becoming interchangeable so much as that the Internet, or homepage, allows the

homeland to be experienced in a mediated way in the new home. Members of the Indian diaspora have had a unique immigrant experience in North America, in that they can identify by the Indian category of Non-Resident Indian (NRI), allowing them to repatriate their earnings easily while living abroad. It also creates and atmosphere of connectedness to the homeland that many immigrants do not have. NRIs are formally recognised as Indian citizens living outside of India, and they continue to identify very strongly with their Indian culture.

Werbner (2002) argues that a new postmodern interpretation of diaspora is "scattered communities yearning for a lost national homeland, whether real or imaginary" (120). Members of the Indian diaspora who use the Internet to connect with Indian culture could be thought of as post-modern diasporic tourists because they able to see the sights and sounds of home on demand, interpret them, recontextualise and normalise them (Urry in Karlsson 306). Rojek and Urry (1997) argue that while the dominant position is tourism and travel studies is that tourism is a quest for the authentic expression of a culture, in fact, much of tourism involves a search for the inauthentic—the perfect simulation of an idealistic authenticity (11-12). I would posit that diasporic music bloggers record popular "classic" songs because they evoke a sense of nostalgia for an imaginary, idealised homeland. In this respect, most of the music bloggers in India could also be thought of as online diasporic tourists because they are people living in congested urban centers that do not resemble their notion of the ideal India represented in the films that the music is taken from, and neither do they resemble the culture of the towns and villages that many IT workers grew up in. While it is a stretch to suggest that Indian people living in India constitute an virtual diaspora, in this time of an increasing

awareness of "global communities," the sense of being a "citizen of the world" while living in massive, anonymous urban centers and working for multinational corporations could possibly prompt a similar longing for an imaginary homeland as those actually living outside of India. For both of these geographical categories of music bloggers, online connections through the use of music that confirms traditional Indian identity serve to reinforce idealistic images of the homeland that are shared and assumed among members of this virtual community.

IV. The Embodied and The Virtual: Closing Thoughts

One of the biggest personal challenges I have faced while doing this research has been coming to terms with the duality of the Indian music blogging community as both virtual and embodied. I come from the generation of people who are increasingly turning to online spaces to fill many social needs, and I myself participate in several online communities in addition to my offline communities, most which also have an online presence. In my own experience, I tend to think of the online communities that I participate in as existing entirely in a virtual space, choosing to ignore the fact that the people I interact with are real people living in real places, instead maintaining fictional impressions of them as I want them to be[17].

However, I believe my online experience does not speak for the common experience. Most people I interact with online are eager to be known in terms of their offline life and eager to learn the truth about my offline life. I prefer to keep my real appearance and voice hidden and I prefer to not learn what the people I interact with look like because I enjoy the fantasy of anonymity. For the most part, the members of the Indian music blogging community fall into the category of Internet users who prefer to be known to their listeners and readers, while still keeping just enough anonymity to protect their personal security. The desire to be known allows the bloggers to interact in honest and vulnerable ways, exposing their amateur singing voices to the critical ears of listeners. It demonstrates the embodied nature of this virtual space, even if the people

[17] The first time I heard the voice of a person whom I had only previously interacted with through textual communication, I remarked that his voice did not sound the way I had imagined it. After giving it some thought, I realised that I had imagined his voice sounding like mine, because that was how I heard his written words in my mind.

who embody it are not in the same place. While my personal resistance to accepting the real lives of my online acquaintances is very restricting in terms of experiencing all that my online communities have to offer, it has led down some interesting paths of inquiry.

The Embodied

There is a strong, utopian pan-Indian rhetoric that runs in music blog discourse. BlogSwara is partly a product of this rhetoric, and Indian diversity is demonstrated through the use of various languages for the song lyrics. It is very common for bloggers to post songs in languages other than their first on their blogs, and often the blogger has no working knowledge of the language. The influential blogger Jo (www.jocalling.blogspot.com) writes:

> India is a land of different cultures, languages and traditions. It is this factor that summed up to the words *Unity in Diversity*. So I thought it would be good to have a multilingual album. But this was for the first version. For rest of the versions, it just happened naturally as there are people from different parts of India and abroad [who contribute to BlogSwara]. I think BlogSwara has to cross the barriers of languages and more languages, people from other countries will be added and BlogSwara will be an international platform where people unite in the name of music - not in the name of their race, region or religion. Just like the slogan says - *United in Music*. (email from Joseph Thomas, 17 October 2007)

As someone who has never visited India, I have no context for placing this pan-Indian rhetoric, but as someone who lives in a multicultural country I have no doubt that

it is highly politicised. An interesting direction for future research on this topic would be to situate this rhetoric in a broader Indian and diasporic context and explore they ways that music blogging is motivated or served by it.

While the discourse within the Indian music blogging community maintains an open and welcoming attitude, this online community is bounded by many of the same values and conditions that shape offline communities. As far as can be determined from what people post about themselves, almost all the members are middle-class and work in the IT industry. They have a shared cultural identity as Indian people or NRIs, a shared common language of English, but all are multilingual. Of course, there is a shared love of music, and while all of the bloggers seem to have deep respect for professional musicians, they are also very humble about their own abilities and downplay any musical training or previous performance experience they may have had.

The relationships fostered in the Indian music blogging community online have at times been experienced in offline meetings. There have been two occasions that I know where groups of bloggers living in the same areas have gathered together to meet and get to know each other face to face. For the members of this community, meeting in person adds an additional dimension to their relationship and allows them to know each other better, which enhances the social aspect of the music blogging experience for all the music bloggers involved, as Sindhuja wrote me:

> Yes, my interaction with some of the music bloggers does go beyond comments on blogs, involving other means such as phone, chat and emails. I met [four] bloggers at an audiobloggers' meet at Bangalore in December last year. The

> blogging community plays quite an active role in my social life. (email from Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam, 2 October 2007)

Not only is the music itself embodied as the singer records it, but the relationships have at times been validated through embodied meetings.

The Virtual

Kitzmann suggests that the Internet is more than a simulation of real life, but actually embodies it in the case of users documenting their lives with webcams. He studied video bloggers who created websites that offered live, 24-hour, streaming video feeds from their homes. He asserts that the Internet actually embodies the real experiences captured by the blogs because it updates in real time and can eliminate biases caused by editing; these images do not claim to actually be real, but they capture a sense of reality in a remote location (60). The songs posted in music blogs are not updated in real time, but there is still a sense that they capture a sense of reality because the listener can hear the true voice of the singer, replete with noticeable flaws in many instances. The flaws demonstrate to listeners that the music is embodied in the offline world, despite the fact that singers work very hard to eliminate the flaws from their performances.

Appadurai (1996), writing prior to the widespread use of the Internet, suggests that "the pains of cultural reproduction in a disjunctive global world are, of course, not eased by the effects of mechanical art (or mass media), for these media afford powerful resources for counternodes of identity that youth can project against parental wishes or

desires" (45). But, in fact the Internet as a mass medium can engage cultural reproduction in a time of increasing transnational movement and globalisation. Several early Internet ethnographies have explored the use of the Internet as a carrier for cultural information across transnational spaces (see Adams and Ghose 2003, Whitaker 2004, Hiller and Franz 2004). These three studies all looked at ways that the Internet is used to connect people in the diaspora with people in the homeland by sharing news, cultural artifacts, and capital.

I would argue that the Internet might be understood in these contexts as a post-modern culture bearer, storing and sharing reified cultural artifacts. These artifacts act as reminders of home for the people living in the diaspora and come to represent the ideal of the homeland in the imaginations both of people abroad and people at home. For example, the music shared by musicians in the Indian music blogging community is largely film music, and while there is historical precedent for the prevalence of film music in Indian popular culture, the images in the films and the lyrical content of the songs demonstrate a stereotypical ideal of India that reinforces traditional values and roles. Rojek and Urry (1997) argue that much of tourism is about finding the "perfect simulations" of an idealised culture (11-12). The songs posted in music blogs could be considered cultural artifacts that are imperfect simulations striving to be perfect, and the bloggers are virtual tourists seeking to connect with Indian artifacts in order to confirm their own Indian identity.

Adams and Ghose suggest that specialised online spaces can serve to preserve cultural information (429-430), and they can be both conservative and innovative. Most individual music blogs represent the conservative attitude towards cultural preservation,

whereas BlogSwara is a more innovative space where Indian music is made with computer technology rather than traditional instruments, and the songwriting often represents a fusion of world music genres. BlogSwara "supports active engagement with others through contribution, borrowing and consumption" (Adams and Ghose 430).

The Internet and Language

Recently I heard Paul Théberge tell as story about his experience as a new user in the online networking site Facebook, a story that clearly rang true to me and many other members of the audience. He spoke of joining Facebook and soon after being invited by one of his colleagues to be his "friend." He wondered: did she really consider them friends? He had not thought of their relationship as friendly before that moment, but perhaps she did. He accepted her invitation, only to discover that she had over 70 "friends" that she had invited before him. In my personal Facebook network I have some "friends" with close to 500 numbered among their "friends." If social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook do not allow users to define the nature of the relationship beyond being "friends," does this alter our nuanced understanding of degrees of relationships in spoken and written English? In online context the word "friend" refers to someone who is in your "friends list," and "friends" even becomes a verb, for example, "he 'friends'd' her yesterday," meaning, "he added her to his friends list."

Does our notion of community change in similar ways in an online context? In this discussion of contemporary notions of community as they are manifested on the Internet, one thing that is important to question is whether the entire meaning of

community has become devalued or changed due to its use on the Internet. Is it possible that the use of the word "community" by marketing firms and website owners devalues its meaning on the Internet where it is used very casually to refer to almost any network of users or sites? In regards to both the examples of "friends" and "community," it is my understanding, both as a researcher and as an active Internet user, that the online connotations of these words have not (as of yet) begun to alter our offline understandings of them. Based on my experience, it seems that a large number of Internet users maintain a separate and restricted vocabulary for use online that employs words from standard English but with constricted, simplified meanings. As online spaces become more pervasive in mainstream media it is certainly possible that the online meanings will find their way into spoken English, but at the moment this has not occurred in my experience.

What does this assertion mean for my concept of community in regards to Indian music bloggers? I have argued that Indian music bloggers qualify as a community in the traditional sense, but when they described themselves as a community they are employing the word in the online context of community. If, in an online context, "community" can refer to any network of users loosely connected in some way, what does this mean for the Indian music blogging community? I know that I consider some of my "Facebook friends" as friends in the real, embodied sense, but others I consider only acquaintances—with these "friends" I use Facebook as a way of following the important events in their lives without actually interacting with them; but with my "real life friends" I use Facebook as a way of communicating with them regularly through messages, photos, and comments, even if they live far away.

Do online communities also maintain a duality of meaning in how they conceive of the nature of their community? Do they have a "real community" with some online spaces, but only a "social networking community" with others? I currently do not have an answer to this question, but I suspect (and hope!) that this is the answer. Online communities are such a vital part of many people's social lives, it seems almost necessary that at least some of them carry similar meaning for members as local, face-to-face communities.

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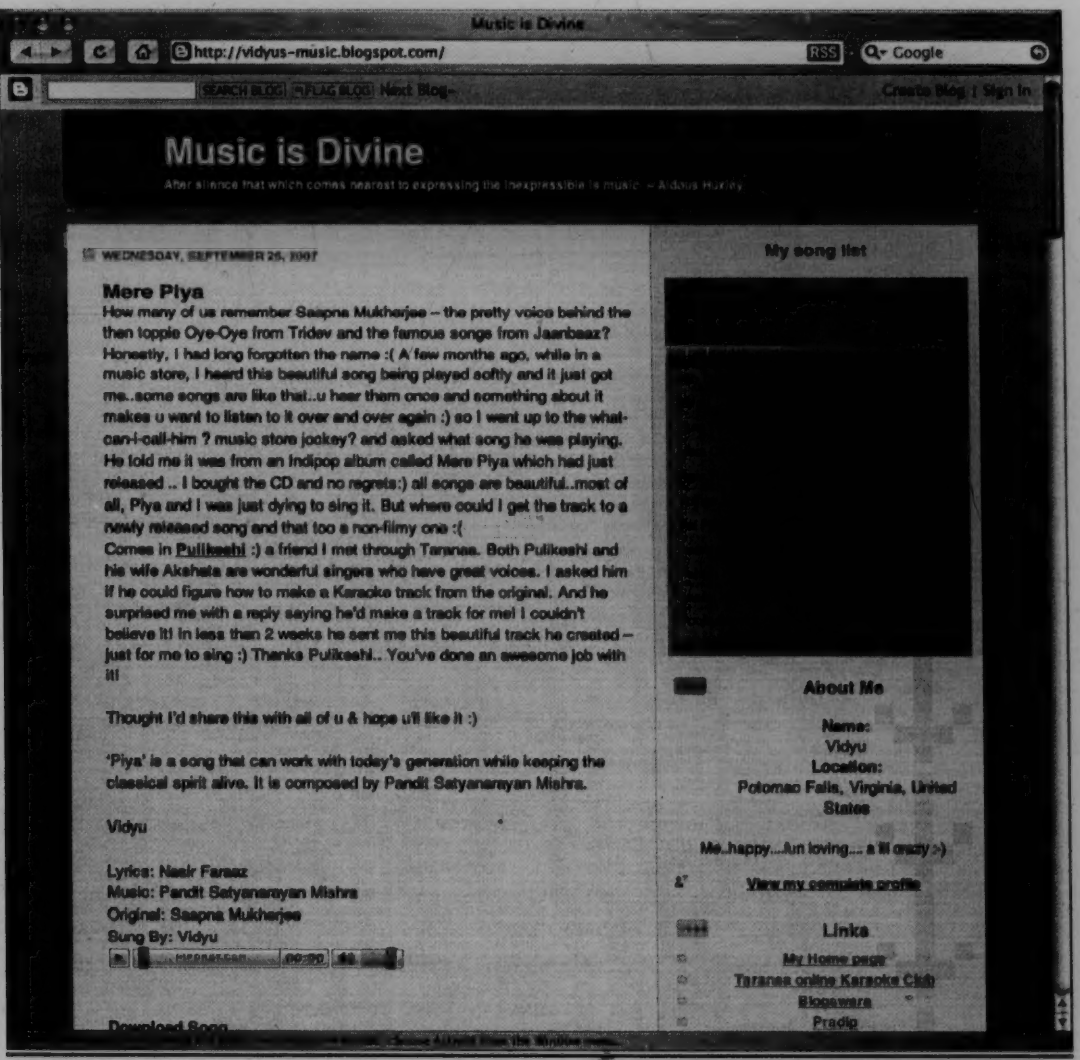
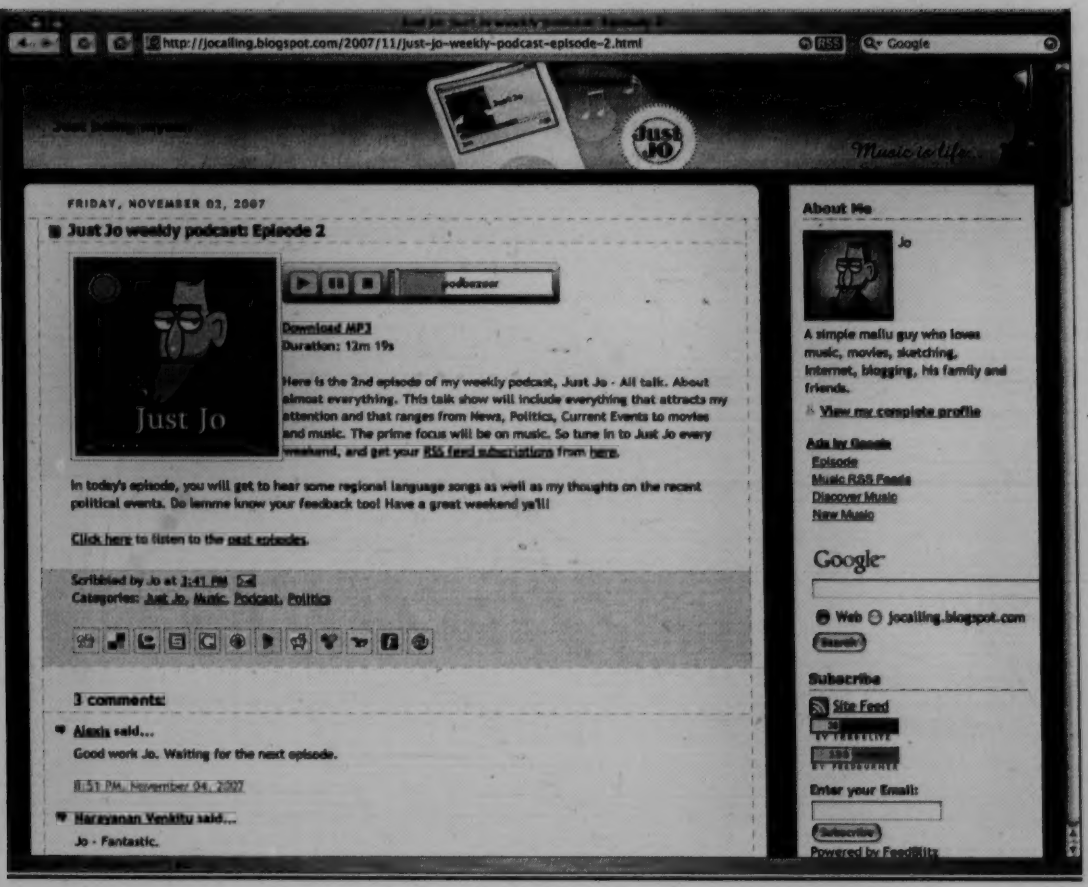
Appendix 1: Screenshots of Music Blogs

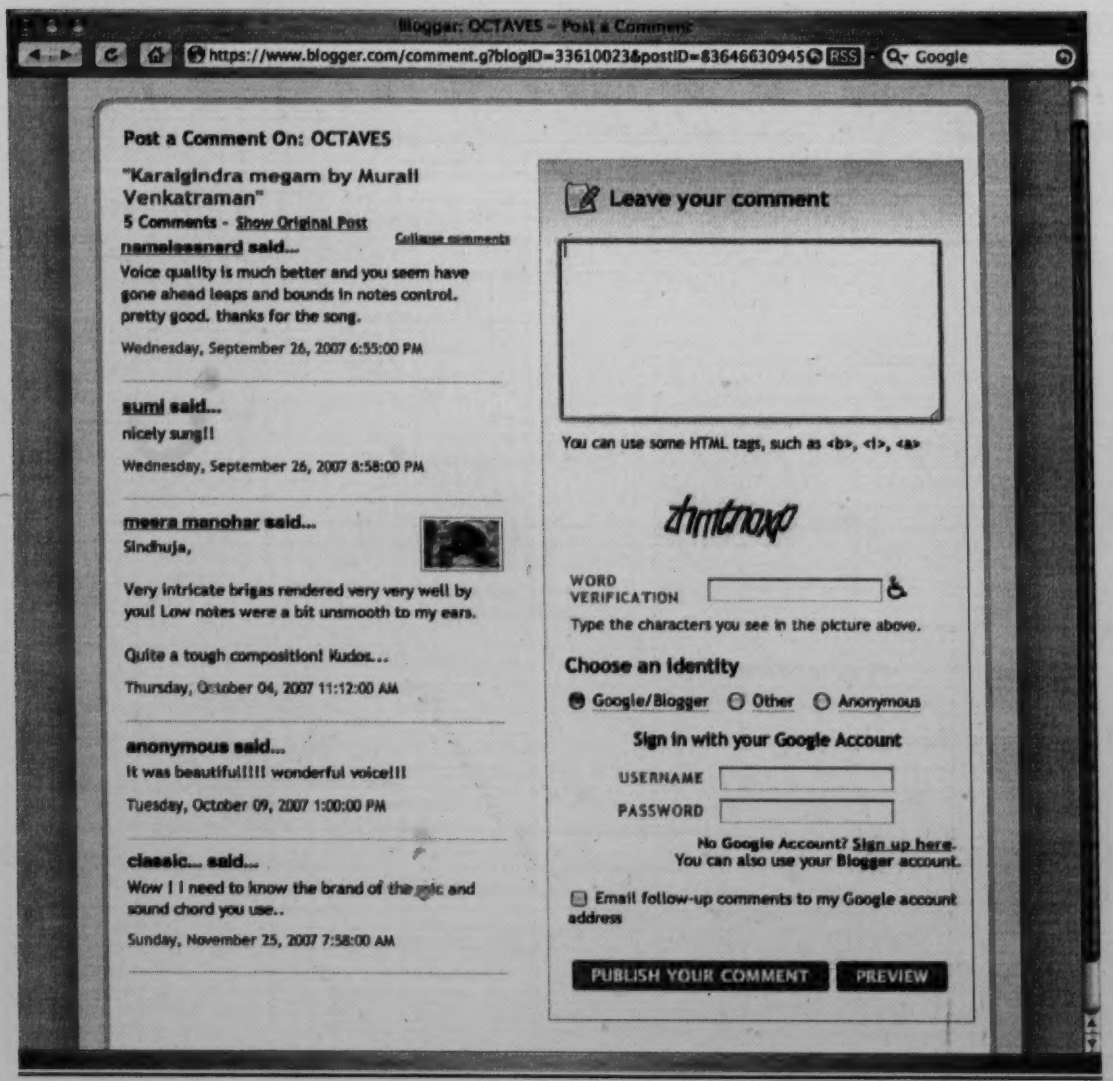
Vidyu's Music Blog, 25 September 2007


Music is Divine
http://vidyus-music.blogspot.com/
Google
Next Blog»
Create Blog | Sign In
Music is Divine
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2007
Mere Piya
How many of us remember Saapna Mukherjee – the pretty voice behind the then topple Oye-Oye from Tridev and the famous songs from Jaanbaaz? Honestly, I had long forgotten the name :(A few months ago, while in a music store, I heard this beautiful song being played softly and it just got me..some songs are like that..u hear them once and something about it makes u want to listen to it over and over again :) so I went up to the what-can-I-call-him ? music store jockey? and asked what song he was playing. He told me it was from an Indipop album called Mere Piya which had just released .. I bought the CD and no regrets:) all songs are beautiful..most of all, Piya and I was just dying to sing it. But where could I get the track to a newly released song and that too a non-filmy one :(
Comes in Pulikeshi :) a friend I met through Taranaa. Both Pulikeshi and his wife Akshata are wonderful singers who have great voices. I asked him if he could figure how to make a Karaoke track from the original. And he surprised me with a reply saying he'd make a track for me! I couldn't believe it! In less than 2 weeks he sent me this beautiful track he created – just for me to sing :) Thanks Pulikeshi.. You've done an awesome job with it!
Thought I'd share this with all of u & hope u'll like it :)
'Piya' is a song that can work with today's generation while keeping the classical spirit alive. It is composed by Pandit Satyanarayan Mishra.
Vidyu
Lyrics: Nasir Faraaz
Music: Pandit Satyanarayan Mishra
Original: Saapna Mukherjee
Sung By: Vidyu
Download Song
My song list
About Me
Name:
Vidyu
Location:
Potomac Falls, Virginia, United States
Me..happy....fun loving.... a lil crazy :-)
View my complete profile
Links
My Home page
Taranaa online Karaoke Club
Blogeware
Pradip

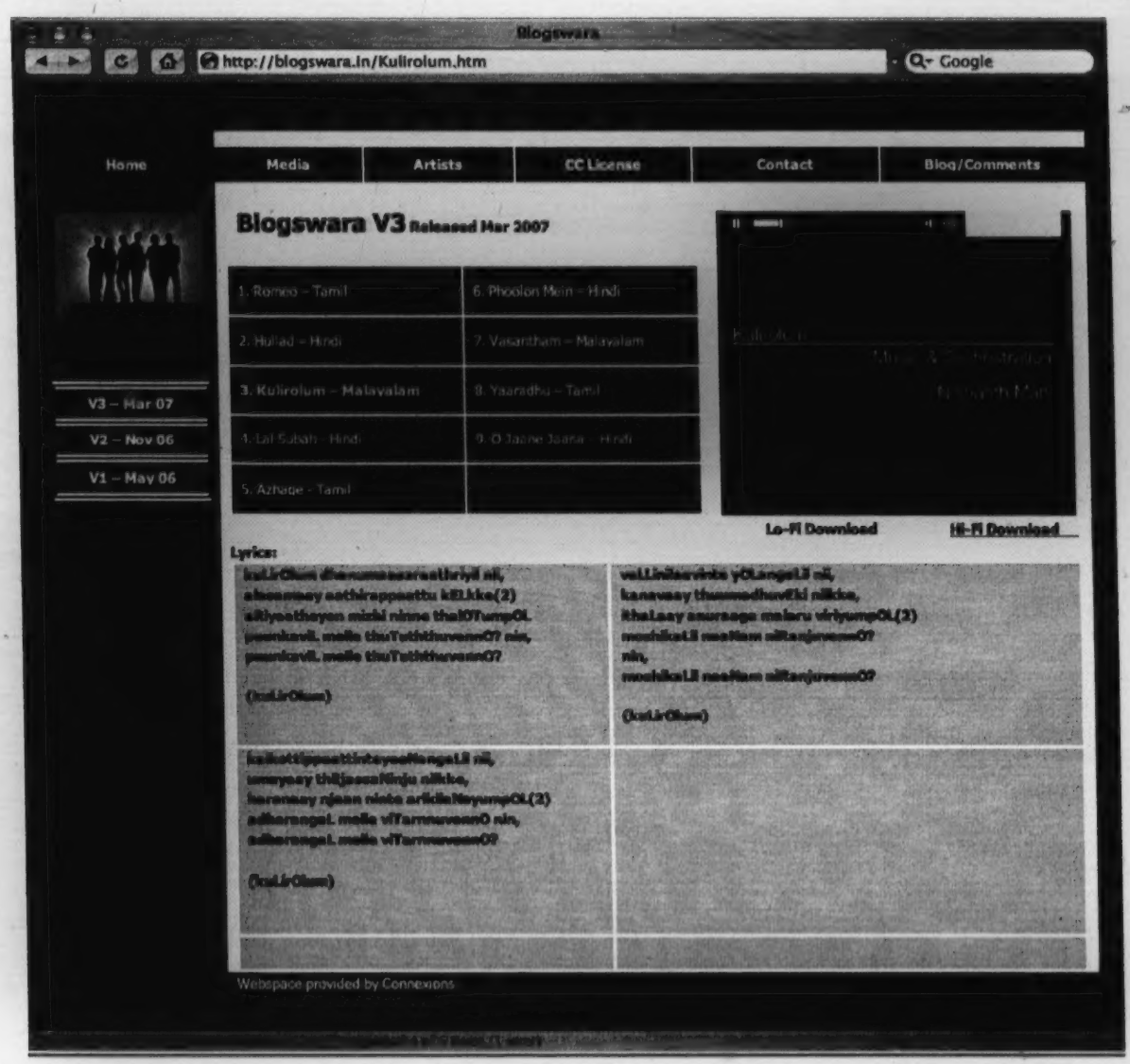
Joseph Thomas' Music, Podcasting, and Text Blog, 2 November 2007


http://jocalling.blogspot.com/2007/11/just-jo-weekly-podcast-episode-2.html
Google
Music is life...
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 02, 2007
Just Jo weekly podcast: Episode 2
Just Jo
Download MP3
Duration: 12m 19s
Here is the 2nd episode of my weekly podcast, Just Jo - All talk. About almost everything. This talk show will include everything that attracts my attention and that ranges from News, Politics, Current Events to movies and music. The prime focus will be on music. So tune in to Just Jo every weekend, and get your RSS feed subscriptions from here.
In today's episode, you will get to hear some regional language songs as well as my thoughts on the recent political events. Do lemme know your feedback too! Have a great weekend ya'll!
Click here to listen to the past episodes.
Scribbled by Jo at 1:41 PM
Categories: Just Jo, Music, Podcast, Politics
3 comments:
Alexis said...
Good work Jo. Waiting for the next episode.
11:51 PM, November 04, 2007
Narayanan Venkitu said...
Jo - Fantastic.
About Me
Jo
A simple mallu guy who loves music, movies, sketching, internet, blogging, his family and friends.
View my complete profile
Ads by Google
Episode
Music RSS Feeds
Discover Music
New Music
Google
Web jocalling.blogspot.com
Subscribe
Site Feed
Enter your Email:
Powered by FeedBlitz

An example of a "comments" page from Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam's Music Blog, on a post from 26 September 2007.


Blogger: OCTAVES - Post a Comment
https://www.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=33610023&postID=63646630945
Google
Post a Comment On: OCTAVES
"Karaigindra megam by Murali Venkatraman"
5 Comments - Show Original Post
Collapse comments
nameless nerd said...
Voice quality is much better and you seem have gone ahead leaps and bounds in notes control. pretty good. thanks for the song.
Wednesday, September 26, 2007 6:55:00 PM
sumi said...
nicely sung!!
Wednesday, September 26, 2007 8:58:00 PM
meera manohar said...
Sindhuja,
Very intricate brigas rendered very very well by you! Low notes were a bit unsmooth to my ears.
Quite a tough composition! Kudos...
Thursday, October 04, 2007 11:12:00 AM
anonymous said...
It was beautiful!!!!! wonderful voice!!!
Tuesday, October 09, 2007 1:00:00 PM
classic... said...
Wow ! I need to know the brand of the mic and sound chord you use..
Sunday, November 25, 2007 7:58:00 AM
Leave your comment
You can use some HTML tags, such as <b>, <i>, <a>
WORD VERIFICATION
Type the characters you see in the picture above.
Choose an Identity
Google/Blogger
Other
Anonymous
Sign in with your Google Account
USERNAME
PASSWORD
No Google Account? Sign up here.
You can also use your Blogger account.
Email follow-up comments to my Google account address
PUBLISH YOUR COMMENT
PREVIEW

BlogSwara version 3, main page.



Appendix 2: Music Blog Statistics

Summary of the information found in the table of music blogs tracked by Audio India (www.audioindia.blogspot.com).

Of 82 music blogs listed on Audio India, there are 79 active music blogs and 3 non-music blogs (defined by a total lack of music content). Only the 79 active music blogs are listed below.

There are 64 male bloggers and 33 female bloggers. There are 3 groups of male authors, 1 mixed gender group, 1 male/female partnership, and 1 of unknown gender.

Current country (Home region in India)

Bangalore = 10	US (Bangalore) = 0	Total = 10
Tamilnadu = 13	US (Tamilnadu) = 8	Total = 21
Kerala = 10	US (Kerala) = 3	Total = 13

Andhra Pradesh = 2
Calcutta = 1
Bombay = 2
US (unknown) = 20 (I suspect 10 to be South Indian based on languages frequently used)
Other (unknown) = 3
Unknown = 9

44 = confirmed South Indian
3 = confirmed North Indian

List of Music Bloggers tracked on Audio India (audioindia.blogspot.com)

Name	Musical Role	Gender	Current Residence	Home Region in India (if different)
Ajitha Watal	Singer	Female	New Jersey, US	Tamilnadu
Anand Prabhu	Singer	Male	New York, US	Tamilnadu
Anil Kumar	Guitarist, Composer	Male	Trivandrum, Kerala	
Anitha Shalini	Singer	Female	United States	Tamilnadu
Ann	Singer	Female	California, US	Unknown
Anup	Guitarist	Male	United States	Kerala
Arathi Menon	Singer	Female	Kerala	
Aravind	Singer	Male	Virginia, US	Tamilnadu
Arethusa	Singer	Female	Chennai, Tamilnadu	
Azam Khan	Singer	Male	Oregon, US	Unknown
Balaji	Composer	Male	Texas, US	Tamilnadu
Baranidaran	Singer	Male	Chennai, Tamilnadu	
Biju	Singer	Male	Kerala	
Chinmayi	Singer	Female	Chennai, Tamilnadu	

Name	Musical Role	Gender	Current Residence	Home Region in India (if different)
Cinci Voice	Singers (14)	Female (5) Male (9)	United States	Various
Deblina Mukhopadhyaya	Singer	Female	California, US	
Deepak Roy	Singer	Male	Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh	
Dhiraj Barla	Singer	Male	Toronto, Canada	Unknown
Divya S Menon	Singer	Male	Kerala	
Encore	Band	Male (5)	Chennai, Tamilnadu	
Ganesh D	Singer, Composer	Male	Chennai, Tamilnadu	
Gumbalsband	Band	Male (2)	Unknown	
Harish Sivaramakrishnan	Singer, Violinist, Composer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Heman A. K.	Singer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Hemanth Sharma	Singer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Janani Vasudev	Singer	Female	Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh	
Jenni	Singer	Female	Tamilnadu	
Joseph Thomas	Singer, Composer	Male	Kerala	
Jothi	Singer	Unknown	Unknown	
Kallara Gopan	Singer	Male	Trivandrum, Kerala	
Kiran	Singer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Kishor Kumar	Singer	Male	Boston, US	
Krishna	Singer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Leena	Singer	Female	Toronto, Canada	
Madhu Rao	Singer	Female	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Manoj	Singer	Male	United States	Trivandrum, Kerala
Meera Manohar	Singer	Female	California, US	Unknown
Mousumi Karmakar	Singer	Female	Kolkatta, Bengal	
Murali Venkatraman	Singer, Composer	Male	South Carolina, US	Tamilnadu
Murali Ramanathan	Singer	Male	Trivandrum, Kerala	
Narayanan Venkitu	Lyricist, Composer	Male	California, US	Tamilnadu
Naveen	Singer	Male	Tamilnadu	
Parasmani Acharya	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
Poornima	Singer	Female	Tamilnadu	
Pradip Soumasundaran	Singer, Composer	Male	Kerala	
Radhika Krishan	Singer	Female	Unknown	
Raghunath Rao	Singer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Rajesh Raman	Singer	Male	United Kingdom	Unknown
Ram Krishnan	Singer	Male	Kerala	
Ranjith & Reshma	Singers	Fermale (1) Male (1)	United States	Unknown
Rashmi Nair	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown

Name	Musical Role	Gender	Current Residence	Home Region in India (if different)
Roshni Chandran	Singer	Male	California, US	Unknown
Sam Kolli	Composer	Male	Unknown	
Santosh	Singer	Male	Tamilnadu	
Sharmila Gopan	Singer	Female	Unknown	
Shobha	Singer	Female	Mumbai, Maharashtra	
Shoestring the Band	Band	Male	Chennai, Tamilnadu	
Shrikanth Kumar	Singer	Male	Unknown	
Sindhuja Bhathavatsalam	Singer	Female	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Soumitra Sarkar	Singer	Male	Unknown	
Sowmya	Singer	Female	Unknown	
Sreekanth Sasikanth	Singer	Male	Kerala	
Srividya Kasturi	Singer	Female	Australia	
Srividya	Composer	Female	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Swati Kanitkar	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
Subin	Singer	Male	United States	Unknown
Suchin Asuri	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
Sumi Bhakthavatsalam	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
Suresh Kumar	Composer	Male	Bangalore, Karnataka	
Sushma Praveen	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
T C Ratnapuri	Singer	Male	United States	Tamilnadu
Thahseen Mohammed	Singer	Unknown	United States	Unknown
The Sound Junction	Band	Male (3)	Tamilnadu	
Venkata Krishna	Singer	Male	United States	Unknown
Venkatesh	Singer	Male	Tamilnadu	
Vidyu Appaiah	Singer	Female	United States	Unknown
Vikram Venkatesan	Singer	Male	Tamilnadu	
Vipin	Singer	Male	Mumbai, Maharashtra	
Vipul Murali	Singer	Male	Unknown	

Appendix 3: Sample Repertoire List

Repertoire List from a Random Sample of Music Blogs
(All songs are karaoke recordings of film songs unless otherwise indicated)

Blogger: Ajitha Watal S
URL: musicalwatts.blogspot.com
Song: Unakaaga Thaane (not karaoke)
Movie: Nenjil Jil Jil (2006, Tamil)
Music Director: Imaan
Singers: Unnikrishnan and Sujatha Menon

Blogger: Azam Khan
URL: khan-sahab.blogspot.com
Song: Door Reh Kar
Movie: Amaanat (1977, Hindi)
Music Director: Ravi
Singer: Mohammed Rafi

Blogger: Barani
URL: baranismusic.blogspot.com
Song: Sharanam Bhava
Movie: Sethu (1999, Tamil)
Music: Shri Narayana Theerthar Swamigal
Singer: Sujata

Blogger: Janani Vasudev
URL: jananivasu.blogspot.com
Song: Chinna Chinna Vanna Kuyil
Movie: Mouna Ragam (1986, Tamil)
Music by: Ilayaraaja

Blogger: Kishor Kumar
URL: ragakairali.blogspot.com
Song: Ikkareyanente thamasam
Movie: Karthika (1968, Malayalam)
Music: M. S. Baburaj

Blogger: Meera Manohar
URL: swarasthaanam.blogspot.com
Song: Narumugaiyae
Movie: Iruvar (1977, Tamil)
Singers: Unnikrishnan, Bombay Jayashree

Blogger: Murali Venkataman
URL: swara.blogspot.com
Song: Chentharmizhi
Movie: Perumazakkaalam (2004, Malayalam)
Composer: M. Jayachandran
Singers: Madhu Balakrishnan, Chithra

Blogger: Paras
URL: paras-sargam.blogspot.com
Song: Maara Daala
Movie: Devdas (2002, Hindi)

Blogger: Poornima
URL: (poornimap.blogspot.com)
Song: Kannan Vanthu Paduginraan
Movie: Rettai Vaal Kuruvi (1987, Tamil)
Music: Illayaraaja
Singer: S. Janaki

Blogger: Audra
URL: singingspirit.castpost.com
Song: Bole Radha Shyam Deewani
Genre: Bhajan
Singer: Lata Mangeshkar

Blogger: Shobha
URL: shobha.blogspot.com
Song: Tujhse Naraaz
Movie: Masoom (1983, Hindi)
Singer: Anup Goshal

Blogger: Santosh
URL: san-inisai.blogspot.com
Song: Elangaathu Veesuthu
Movie: Pithamagan (2003, Tamil)
Singer: Sriram Parthasarathy

Blogger: Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam
URL: octaves.blogspot.com
Song: Varnam
Genre: Carnatic
Swaras (tune): Sindhuja Bhakthavatsalam
Lyrics: Vijayalakshmi Bhakthavatsalam

Blogger: Soumitra
URL: soumitrasongs.blogspot.com
Song: Halka Halka Sa Yeh Nasha
Movie: Chocolate (2005, Hindi)
Music Director: Pritam
Original Singer: Sonu Nigam

Blogger: Suchin
URL: itsmesinging.blogspot.com
Song: Dil Kya Kare
Movie: Julie (1975, Hindi)
Music: Rajesh Roshan
Singer: Kishore Kumar

Blogger: Venkatesh
URL: raagha.blogspot.com
Song: Kadhal Vaithu Kadhal Vaithu
Movie: Deepavali (2007, Tamil)
Singer: Vijay Jesudoss

Blogger: Vidyu
URL: vidyus-music.blogspot.com
Song: Mera Dil Bhi Kitna Pagal Hai
Movie Name: Saajan (1991, Hindi)
Music: Nadeem-Shravan
Singers: Alka Yagnik, Kumar Sanu

Appendix 4: Interview Excerpts

These excerpts are from communications with two different music bloggers. The first is Joseph Thomas (jocalling.blogspot.com), founder of BlogSwara and my primary research consultant. His responses were consistently detailed and thoughtful, and our communication involved some reciprocations—he asked me many questions about myself and Canada, and also invited me to make a guest post on his blog on Creative Commons. The second blogger is Harshan of Cincivoice (cincivoice.blogspot.com). His responses came quickly and enthusiastically, but with less detail than the other bloggers I corresponded with.

On 8/22/07, Jessica Keyes wrote:

Hi Jo,

I got back from my trip last week and I've just been very busy with school work since then. Thank you for your reply once again, and I've taken your advice and contacted Vidyu. Hopefully she will write me back!

[*personal conversation and discussion on Creative Commons*]

Now for my question to you: Could you tell me the story of how you began blogging and sharing your music through your blog? How were you first exposed to it? How did you first decide to blog? What was it like making your first music blog post? What is it about blogging that compels you to continue doing it after so much time?

Take care, I hope to hear from you soon!

Warm regards,
Jessica

On 8/23/07, Joseph Thomas wrote:

Hi Jessica

Hope you had a fun trip. Your notes on CC license was very informative. If you do not mind guest blogging in my blog, I request you to put it as a blog post so that people can get this information. Please do let me know.

To answer your questions:

Could you tell me the story of how you began blogging and sharing your music through your blog? How were you first exposed to it? How did you first decide to blog?

I read about blogs in an online article but it took me sometime before I started my own blog. In the beginning it was just like an online diary. I wrote so much non-sense in the beginning. :-) Then I learnt how people use it to express themselves well and I gave it a serious thought. That is how I began to express my views on everything that goes around me.

I used to do karaoke recordings in some small-time recording studios in my hometown, Thrissur. When I heard about Hipcast (previously audioblog.com) I thought of making use of it and uploaded a couple of recordings that I had to my trial account. I thought I would leave music blogging after the 7 days of trial period. Also a friend taught me how to record songs using softwares and I did a couple of home recordings using the headphone mic (used to voice chat). When another blogger (who is a close friend now) heard my songs in the blog, he asked me not to stop posting songs and he said he would like to gift me an account in Hipcast for 2 years. That was the beginning of music blogging.

What was it like making your first music blog post?

I was skeptical of how people would respond or if anyone would come to my blog at all (at that time, I didn't have a much readership to my blog). But the response was overwhelming. I am glad that I found this medium.

What is it about blogging that compels you to continue doing it after so much time?

What I love about blogging is the platform that it provides me to express myself with absolute freedom. There is no censorship or editor's cut. There is nothing that compels me to blog but I should say I wouldn't want the regular readers of my blogs to be dissapointed so I keep on text blogging and music blogging. Blogging also helped me to improve my writing skills and to meet and interact with people who come from different backgrounds. In total, it helps my learning and thus improve myself as an individual.

Thanks a lot for your recommendations for BlogSwara! I appreciate it a lot. :-)

Regards,
Jo.

On 9/7/07, Jessica Keyes wrote:

Hi Jo,

I'm sorry it's been so long since I last wrote to you, I've been sick. Thanks so much for posting my little article on Creative Commons! I read this article in the NY Times about Kerala, and it made me think of you:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/07/world/asia/07migrate.html

I was wondering if you could tell me how the work towards Blogswara 4 is coming along? Have you had many submissions? So far, how does the caliber of the current submissions compare to the previous albums?

Also, how many people are on the panel? How were they selected?

Unfortunately, I still haven't heard back from any of the other music bloggers I've emailed. If you correspond with anyone you think might be willing to answer some questions, please ask them to email me.

Warm Regards,
Jessica

On 9/15/07, Joseph Thomas wrote:

Hi Jessica

Sorry for the late reply. Thank you for that article you wrote for my blog.

That NY article has gained quite a lot of attention here. :-) People are discussing in the blogs.

As for your questions, my answers are given below:

I was wondering if you could tell me how the work towards Blogswara 4 is coming along? Have you had many submissions? So far, how does the caliber of the current submissions compare to the previous albums?

The first draft submission date is on September 30. So I am waiting for that day.

Also, how many people are on the panel? How were they selected?

We have around 12 people in the panel. The panel consists of lyricists, composers and singers. The selection is entirely based on the talents of the members and opinion from the existing panel members. More members will be added to the panel as we get new and talented musicians.

I will definitely email to the other members to respond to your questions.

Have a great weekend!

Regards,
Jo.

On 10/16/07, Jessica Keyes wrote:

Dear Harshan,

I'll try to keep my questions to very few per email, as I understand that replying can be somewhat time consuming. Don't feel pressured to provide really long answers, just write what you are comfortable with and I'll ask follow-up questions if you don't cover everything I'm curious about.

First, could you please tell me a little about yourself? Where do you live, what do you do? What kind of musical background do you have?

Second, could you please tell me the story of how you first began sharing your music on the Cincivoice blog? Also, why have you chosen blogging as the medium for sharing your music?

Thanks very much for agreeing to contribute to my research project, it will be a huge help!

Warm regards,
Jessica

On 10/16/07, Sreeharshan Muruthiyodan wrote:

Hi,
You can cite my name as Harshan M , Mason Ohio 45040

I am a software developer and am based in Cincinnati. I have no training in vocals but has an ear for music ...I guess. Always had the passion to sing growing up but it was never nortured. Krishna thought about creating cincivoice ....so that people in Cincinnati or wherever they live can show case their talent. We do this as a hobby and great pleasure out of it as it is a nice way to relax after a long week at work :-)

Also with blogging, you get feedback from music lovers all over the world. This helps you improve upon things which you can work on before the next post. Cincivoice has helped us improve our singing skills

Thanks
Harshan

On 10/25/07, Jessica Keyes wrote:

Hi Harshan,

Sorry for the delay in my reply, you know how life can get busy :).

I have a few more questions about you before we move on. Did you grow up in the US? if not, where are you/your family from in India? How do you get exposure to Indian music living in the US?

Did you have any blogging experience before starting with Cincivoice? Is Cincivoice your primary musical outlet? Do you make music or perform in any other contexts?

Warm Regards,
Jessica

On 10/25/07, Sreeharshan Muruthiyodan wrote:

No I did not grow up in the US...I am originally from Bombay India

I always had a passion for singing growing up.

I didnt have any blogging experience before cincivoice...I also perform at local functions :-)

Appendix 5: Web Survey Questions and Sample Responses

This survey is part of a research project on Internet music sharing and community building in the South Asian diaspora. Your answers will be anonymous unless you choose to provide your email address and/or other personal information. I will not use any information you supply for any purposes beyond this research, nor will I share the list of respondents with anyone. If you do not wish to submit your answers directly from the web, email me and I will provide an email version of the survey. Thank you for participating, and please encourage your South Asian friends to do the same!

May I quote your responses in my scholarly publications? If yes, how would you like me to cite you (i.e. full name, pseudonym, anonymous)? You have the right to withdraw from this research project at any time by contacting me.

Yes. Ajay Chandran, Reading, UK

Yes, Bharath Venkatesan, Originally from Tamil Nadu, India, Currently residing in Northern California.

May I contact you with follow up questions to your response? If yes, please enter your contact information below.

AC: Yes

BV: Yes

How old are you? (from a selection of age categories)

AC: 31-35

BV: 27-30

What is your gender?

AC: Male

BV: Male

What is your occupation?

AC: IT Service Delivery Manager

BV: Software Engineer

Where do you live?

AC: Reading, UK

BV: California

How do you identify yourself with regards to your South Asian background? (i.e. Indian, Sikh, NRI, Desi)

AC: Indian

BV: East Indian

Where do you access the Internet?

AC: Home

BV: Home, Office

How much time each week do you spend accessing music online?

AC: 10 hours

BV: 10 to 15 hours

What kinds of music do you access online? Is this the same kind of music that you would purchase on CDs or cassettes?

AC: Mainly Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Ghazals, carnatic classical and also world music. I do frequent some audio blogs too. Some of it, yes!

BV: Music created by Independent artists (those published in Myspace, Sound Click etc)

What portion of the music you access online would you classify as South Asian music? Would you classify any of this music as devotional music?

AC: Most of it! 90%! Devotional, a very small portion. Carnatic music can be classified as devotional also.

BV: About 30% would be South Asian, None of them can be classified as devotional music.

What methods do you use to access this music? (i.e. streaming radio, P2P filesharing, iTunes Music Store)

AC: Mainly streaming, filesharing and downloads.

BV: Streaming Radio.

How do you listen to the music that you access on the Internet? (i.e. on your iPod, computer, burned CDs, etc)

AC: Computer, Burned CD for the car, and also on my phone.

BV: Computer, iPod

Why do you choose to access music on the Internet?

AC: Ease of access, availability and the ability to search and find what I want. Then of course, the variety.

BV: Fast with acceptable compormise on quality; No physical media to store.

Do you participate in any forums or online communities related to music? If yes, please list a few URLs.

AC: Yes. http://www.blogswara.in
http://kaunquest.blogspot.com -> my blog which has links to songs that I have collaborated on.
Also, I am doing online collaborations with various people, trying to create different [the comment ended here]

BV: Yes. Mostly related to music production like soundsonline-forums.com